

*A Return  
Unto Jehovah*

Kenneth McClain, Editor











**The Garfield Heights Church of Christ**

presents

**THE FIFTH ANNUAL LECTURESHIP**

# **"A Return Unto Jehovah"**

**Kenneth McClain, Editor**

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# Introduction



## *We Need Preaching Like The Prophets*

*When we carefully study the Old Testament prophets, we learn many valuable and lasting lessons. Men today cannot be prophets in the sense that these men were; however, we need men who are of the same caliber, men who will speak out as did the prophets. What kind of men were the prophets?*

*They were men of deep conviction. With conviction they spoke God's message and expected the people to respond to it. Jeremiah said, "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard.." (Jer. 4:19).*

*They were men who would get to the point in their preaching. Nathan, in confronting David with sin, said, "Thou art the man" (II Sam. 12:7). Today, we have preachers in some places that will say, "The time is not right to speak out."*

*They did not fear the reaction of men. The case of Elijah's denouncing of Ahab's sin in I Kings 18:1 shows he was not afraid of men. It took a lot of courage to tell this political tyrant that he was wrong. Do we have the courage of Elijah?*

*They were men who did not follow after the crowd. In I Kings 22, Micaiah exemplified this point. The four hundred prophets told the kings of Israel and Judah what they wanted to hear. Micaiah did not go along with the "official" position. We need more men like Micaiah today.*

*They were men who were willing to suffer and die for God's cause. The Hebrew writer tells us something about the prophets: "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered*

*about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy)..." (Heb. 11:37-38). What about Christians today? In II Timothy 3:12 we read, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Are we willing to suffer and die for God's cause?*

*They were men who had grief and pity. Jeremiah said, "When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me" (Jer. 8:18). We must be able to weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15).*

*They were men who spoke of God's judgment. This was a recurring theme for most of the prophets (Mic. 3:12). Paul, the apostle said that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness..." (Acts 17:30,31). We need men like Micah and Paul today.*

*They were men who rebuked false prophets and leaders. In Micah 3:11, "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us?" All sin must be rebuked!*

*They were men who spoke out against social injustices. In the book of Amos we read, "Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from his burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them" (Amos 5:11). We will not prosper by mistreating others today.*

*They were men who became discouraged, but not defeated. Jeremiah said, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men" (Jer. 9:2). Jeremiah was discouraged, but he did not quit. He said, "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:9).*

*May we find men like the prophets who will speak out against sin, wherever it may be found and bring men back to God!*



## *Dedication*

*We the elders, Donald Allison, Alvin Cook and Robert Jent, of Garfield Heights Church of Christ, wish to dedicate this book to the faithful members of the Garfield Heights because of their love for Christ and His Word and also for their interest in lost souls.*

## *Acknowledgement*

*We wish to acknowledge Melba Fox, church secretary, for her many hours spent in helping to make this book possible.*

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# *The Establishment Of The Kingdom*

Joe Gilmore

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History records the time and place of the beginning of the various denominations of our day. We are not particularly interested in these, since Jesus has said, *"Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up"* (Matt. 15:13).

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, *"I will build my church."* We are interested in when and where this church began, and also in how we may identify it.

Jesus used the term *"church"* and the term *"kingdom"* synonymously (Matt. 16:18,19). Paul called the church the *"house of God"* (I Tim. 3:14,15). Hence, in this study to determine when and where the church or kingdom began, we may use these terms interchangeably.

## **1. The Beginning Of The Lord's Church**

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About 760 B.C. Isaiah prophesied that the church would be established *"in the last days"* (Isa. 2:2-4). In the second chapter of Revelation we read of the seven churches of Asia, which were churches in actual existence. This was about A.D. 96, so we may conclude that the church must have been established sometime between 760 B.C. and 96 A.D.

About fifty years after Isaiah made his prophecy, Micah made a similar prophecy (Mic. 4:1). This was written about 710 B.C. In about the year 67 A.D., the apostle Paul referred to the kingdom (church) as having been received (Heb. 12:28). In 710 B.C. the church was something of the future, while in 67 A.D. it had been received and was in existence. Thus, we conclude that the

church must have had its beginning on earth sometime between these two dates.

In about 603 B.C. the prophet Daniel predicted that God would at some time in the future set up a kingdom (Dan. 2:44). In about 74 A.D., Paul, in writing to the church at Colossae, speaks of people being "*translated into the kingdom*" (Col. 1:13). Then the church was established sometime between 603 B.C. and 64 A.D.

John the Baptist began his preaching in A.D. 26. Isaiah, Micah, Daniel, and others had prophesied of the coming kingdom. In about A.D. 26, John boldly declared that the kingdom was not only coming, but that it was at hand (Matt. 3:12). About eight years later, A.D. 34, Luke speaks of the church (kingdom) as actually in existence (Acts 6:1). This confines our investigation to a much shorter period of time. In A.D. 26, the church was yet to be established, while in A.D. 34, it was in actual existence.

In the year 27 A.D. Christ began to preach that "*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 4:17). In about the year A.D. 31, Christ commissioned the twelve to preach: "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 4:17). In about the year A.D. 31, Christ commissioned the twelve to preach: "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 10:5-7). The seventy were sent out by the Lord about one year later, or in A.D. 32, and were told to preach: "*The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you*" (Luke 10:8,9). It was during the same year, that Christ said: "*Upon this rock, I will build my church*" (Matt. 16:18). He did not mean that he would at that time build his church, but that he would build it at some future date. After Christ's death, we read that Joseph of Arimathaea was "*waiting for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 23:51).

According to these Scriptures, the beginning of the church was still future in A.D. 32. Just one year later, A.D. 33, Luke tells us that the Lord was adding people to the church (Acts 2:47). We must conclude that the church (kingdom) began within the year 32 A.D.-33 A.D.

Now let us turn back to some of the earlier prophecies of the beginning of the kingdom. The second chapter of Isaiah tells us three specific things about the beginning of the



church (kingdom): (1) It is to be in the last days. (2) All nations are to flow into it. (3) It is to begin in Jerusalem.

In Acts the second chapter, on the day of Pentecost, the day we first find people being added to the church, in Jerusalem, we find the apostle Peter declaring as he quoted Joel's prophecy, that this is the time referred to as "*last days*." The prophets of old predicted that the Lord's house, or church, would be established on earth in the "*last days*." Peter declared "*this is that*" (Acts 2:16). It was also on this day that the invitation was first extended to "*all nations*" (Acts 2:39).

This accounts for the saying that the kingdom which Jesus built had its beginning in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, in A.D. 33. It is a historical fact that Jesus has established His kingdom!

## **2. Take Up Events In Revelation And Go Backward**

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In Revelation 1:9 John said that he was in the kingdom. Paul instructed Timothy how to behave in "*the church of the living God*" (I Tim. 3:15). Paul said the Colossians (1:13) were delivered "*from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son*." In Acts 8:1 we are told that a "*great persecution against the church*." In Acts 5:11 it is said that "*great fear came upon all the church*." In Acts 2:47 we are informed that "*the Lord added to the church*." This takes us back to the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus, A.D. 33. The kingdom was established in Jerusalem, where Zechariah said: "*My house shall be built in it*" (Zech. 1:16).

## **3. The Kingdom (Church) Identified**

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Having found that the Lord built a church on the earth and when and where He built it, the next question is "*How may we recognize that church (kingdom) when we*

*find it?"* In attempting to identify any person or thing of which we have an accurate description, we simply compare it (or him) with the description. The New Testament gives us an accurate description of the church. To identify the church that Jesus built, we simply need to find the church possessing the divinely described elements. Let us turn to the Bible's description of the church.

**Its foundation.** The church has but one foundation. Christ is the foundation of the church (kingdom).

**Its head.** Christ is the only head of the church (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). As the brain controls the physical body, so Christ as the head, controls the body, the church.

**Its name.** The church is spoken of in the New Testament as: The church (Eph. 3:10); the church of God (I Cor. 1:2); The church of the Lord (Acts 20:28 R.V.); The church of the first-born (Heb. 12:23); The body, the church (Col. 1:18); The body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27); The household of God (Eph. 2:19); Churches of Christ, speaking of local congregations (Rom. 16:16); My church, therefore the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18); The church is the bride of Christ, and therefore wears His name (John 3:29; Rom. 7:4; Rev. 21:9; Rev. 22:17; II Cor. 11:2).

**Name of the members.** Disciples (Acts 6:1); Brethren (Acts 9:30); Believers (Acts 5:14); Saints (Acts 9:13); Priests (I Pet. 3:5; Rev. 1:6); The people of God (Heb. 4:9); The children of God (I John 2:1,2); Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Pet. 4:16).

**Its creed.** The word "*creed*" comes from the Latin verb, "*credo*," meaning "*I believe*." Human churches have human creeds. The divine church had the divine creed. Christ, Himself, is the creed of His church (Matt. 16:18; Matt. 10:32,33; John 20:30; Rom. 10:9,10).

**Its book of discipline, "*the apostles teaching*"** (Acts 2:42; John 20:22,23; I Cor. 2:9-13). The apostles' teaching was first oral, but we now have it in written form in the New Testament. The teaching of the apostles as they were guided by the Holy Spirit and sent by Christ is the only Book of Discipline governing Christ's church.

**Its conditions of membership.** Hearing the gospel, faith, repentance, confession of Christ, baptism

(Matt. 28:18,19; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:36-41; Acts 8:1-12; Acts 8:35-39; Acts 9:5-18; Acts 22:14-16; Acts 26:16-19; Acts 10:34-38; Acts 16:1,15; Acts 16:31-33; Acts 18:8; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26,27; Col. 2:12; I Pet. 3:21).

**Its items of worship.** The apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42); Fellowship, contribution and distribution of offerings (II Cor. 8:4; I Cor. 16:2; Rom. 15:26); Prayer (Acts 12:12; I Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1); Singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); Breaking of bread (Lord's Supper) (Matt. 26:26-29; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-24).

**Its organization.** The term "*church*" is used in the New Testament to indicate: All of the saved in every nation from the beginning of the Christian era to the end of time (Col. 1:18). It is also used to denote the saved, or children of God, of some one province, or group of provinces (II Thess. 1:11; Acts 9:31). It denotes the Christians of some one community who assemble together for public worship and who constitute the local congregation in that community (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 1:2). The churches of Christ in New Testament times were independent of one another organically, yet bound together by a common faith and fellowship. Every church was under the direct authority of Christ (Acts 11:29,30; II Cor. 8:4). Local churches had two classes of temporary officers; apostles and prophets. The apostles were personally chosen by the Lord, and had no successors (Acts 10:4; Acts 13:31; II Pet. 1:16; John 20:22). The prophets were inspired teachers (Acts 11:27; Acts 13:1,2; Eph. 4:11). The apostolic and prophetic offices ceased when the New Testament was completed (I Cor. 13:8-10; James 1:25). Local churches were **permanently** given elders (called bishops, pastors, overseers, and presbyters, Tit. 1:5-9; I Tim. 3:1-7; Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:3,4). Deacons (Acts 6:1-5; I Tim. 3:8-13). Evangelists (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; II Tim. 4:5).

**Its fruits.** Christian growth (I Pet. 2:2; II Pet. 1:5-7; II Pet. 3:18). Christian liberality (Acts 2:32; Acts 11:29,30; Phil. 1:3-5; Phil. 4:13-17), the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25), and gospel preaching (Acts 8:4; Acts 11:19-21; Acts 19:10; Acts 28:30,31).

#### **4. Can You Find The Church That Jesus Built? Are You A Member Of It?**

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The church (kingdom) that Christ established must have the points of identification listed, together with any other elements described in the New Testament. What made a Christian in New Testament times will make a Christian now. What made a church of Christ in New Testament times will make a church of Christ now. We urge that you study the New Testament, find what made Christians in the first century, and then determine whether you are a Christian, find the New Testament description of Christ's church, and then determine whether you are a member of it. If not, we plead that you immediately become a member of that church built by our Lord, which has existed "*since A.D. 33.*"

# Haggai, Prophet Of Encouragement

Charles Blair



There are at least two ways to encourage God's people. One is when God's people are bowed low under despair we direct them to the Word of the Lord.

*Psm. 17:8 -- "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings."*

*Psm. 36:7 -- "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."*

*Psm. 57:1 -- "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."*

*Psm. 91:4 -- "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shall thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."*

We can encourage Christians by telling them to trust in the Lord. He will see you through this despair. A second way is to incite God's people to greater service by renewing their dedication to do the will of God.

It is this second way that best describes the work of Haggai. He came on the scene, as did other prophets, under the authority of God. His purpose was to cause the people of God to return to the building of the temple, that now lay in ruins. To show them how their economy and land was not producing due to the temple being neglected. It was necessary to confront them with their sin in order for them to



see how they could once again receive the blessings of God. By obeying God, they would see blessings ensue.

What was the problem among the people when God called Haggai and Zechariah to the task of prophet? What had caused this problem among the people? What would be the solution from God for them? We will use these questions and answers to guide us in our study of this book. The purpose being that each of us might likewise be encouraged to greater service for God.

Two verses in chapter one reveal to us the physical problems. They are verses 6 and 11.

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

There was according to verse 6 a failing economy. They were working hard but the earth did not yield its strength. Their vines produce enough for them to have drink but there was no surplus. Their clothing was not adequate to deal with the winter. There was nothing for them to save in terms of money. Bad times indeed.

And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

Verse 11 reveals to us that everything was affected from man to beast.

The real problem at this point in time was "*no one asked why this was happening?*" Spiritual apathy manifest itself in people not caring enough to ask "*why.*" In other words they had crossed over that line wherein they made no connection between their lives and their relationship with God. It is a clear example of placing God into some "*compartment*" of our lives as opposed to allowing God to dwell in our lives.

According to chapter one the problem had its cause in the temple not being finished. In verses 2, 4 and 9 God through Haggai directs the attention of the people to the cause of their woes.

V. 2 -- *"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."*

V. 4 -- *"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"*

V. 9 -- *"Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."*

Some have reasoned that they delayed building the temple because of a misunderstanding about the 70 years of bondage in Babylon. In other words the 70 years were not finished and hence it was not time to build the temple. This may have contributed to their excuse making but it is not the real reason.

We must look at some background material found in Ezra chapters four through six to gain a sense of what was taking place at this time. In these chapters is an unfolding revelation about the rise of the enemies against God's people.

Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building. and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. (Ezra 4:4-5).

Not content to destroy or stop the work on the temple, the enemies sent letters to Artaxerxes the king.

The letter was a request to Artaxerxes to search the records and see if Jerusalem was not a rebellious and seditious city. Knowing the record of Jerusalem would cause the king to take action against the city. Artaxerxes did order a search of the records and found out that Jerusalem had been the source of a lot of trouble. Hence he sent word that work on the temple was to cease. The enemies, armed with this letter came by force and stopped the building of the temple.

Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia (Ezra 4:24).

For over sixteen years the work ceased. The people went about the business of *"living life."* They allowed the

enemies of God to determine for them the will of God. In the face of such opposition the answer must be as recorded in Acts 5:29.

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said,

We ought to obey God rather than men.

Those who are in opposition to truth should never determine what our perception of truth is today. If we choose to live for God, then we should never cease to live that life in order to appease those who reject God.

Ezra chapter five opens up with the appearance of Haggai and Zechariah. God working through them caused the people to renew their dedication to rebuild the temple. Soon after they started, the opposition again came to them. It was led this time by Tatnai the governor. He sent a letter to Darius the king. The letter was a request for Darius to check the records and see if Cyrus ever gave permission for building the temple. The records were checked and it revealed that Cyrus did give permission.

The sixth chapter closes with the temple being finished and the feast of unleavened bread being celebrated. There was indeed great joy in all Israel. Now let us look at the book of Haggai and see how these events unfolded.

Haggai in the first eleven verses of chapter one presents the issue of building the temple in terms of "*right and wrong*." The people having heard the prophet knew that it was wrong for them to not build the temple. In verse 12 we see the effects of the preaching.

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord.

They recognized their sin and then obeyed the Lord. This obedience was led by Zerubbabel and Joshua.

We find in verse 13 of chapter one the first encouragement from God for them.

Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.

When to the Christian his foes seem so great and opposition

so terrible, he needs to be reminded that God is with him. When he chose the path of obedience to God there is the promise of God being with us.

Heb. 8:10 -- *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."*

Later in the book of Hebrews, chapter 13:5-6 we read this promise:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

The great encouragement is that no matter how much we have sinned, the pathway of obedience can correct our lives. We can once again receive the blessings of God.

Isa. 1:18 -- *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."*

An understanding of the forgiveness of God should encourage any Christian.

On the 24th day of the sixth month work was started on the temple. We know by reading from Ezra earlier that opposition soon occurred. Work now continued in spite of the opposition. On the 21st day of the next month another message comes from God through Haggai. God called on all the people to make a comparison between the temple of Solomon and the present temple they were working on. Let us see now what God said in chapter 2:3.

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

With the opposition from Tatnai the governor and the comparing of the two temples, discouragement was once again settling in their hearts.

In chapter 2:4 we have the second encouragement from God.

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and

be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest;  
and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the  
Lord, and work; for I am with you saith the Lord of  
hosts.

As regarding Tatnai the governor, he could do nothing until he heard from the king. The response from the king was not the business of the people. This was the realm of the work of God. His encouragement to them was to be strong and work. How often we need to understand the same thing in our lives. Certain things fall into the realm of the work of God and others fall into the realm of our work. Therefore, be strong and work. Allow God to work certain things out in His time. Our concern is to *"be strong and work."*

The second issue that was discouraging the people was the comparison of the two temples. They were discouraged by *"their own perception"* of the present temple. But as in all matters, it is what God thinks that is the most important. God was saying to them, *"do not compare the temples."* Be strong in the Lord and work. The issue is not whether or not this present temple is comparable to Solomon's but rather will you as the people work. They did not have the same amount of money nor peace with their neighbors as in Solomon's day. What they did have was this: responsibility to God to build the temple.

Too often today we make the same mistake. We look at the church in the first century and say that the glory now is not comparable. As regarding the dimensions of the church today it must be just like the church of the New Testament.

Rev. 11:1 -- *"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."*

If the church today cannot be measured by the word of God, then it is not the church of Christ. Its doctrine, worship and practice of life must be as it was in the New Testament. What if our numerical growth does not match that of the church in the first century? In this sense we can say, *"don't compare the two, be strong and work for the Lord."* What we must do as God's children is carry out the mission of our Saviour and spread the gospel. If there is never an account in our lifetime of 3000 obeying the gospel at one service, we

should not be discouraged.

Listen to the outline of work as given by Paul in I Corinthians 3:6:

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

Our gospel meetings to reach our neighbors with the truth have in some areas given way to "*week-end seminars*" on church growth. The source material for such activities are surveys that inform us the church is dying. My brethren, "*be strong and work.*"

There is likewise a danger in comparing the church with the way it "*used to be*" in our life times. Fresh in our minds may be the memory of the local congregation doing better than it is now. Such memories can be dealt with by the sage advice given by our Lord, "*be strong and work.*" The time to be builders is NOW!

The next type of encouragement comes from God in chapter 2:5:

According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

God tells them to be strong and work. That is fine for the physical activity but what do you do when the enemy comes? God's encouragement is the control of the mind. Do not fear. We all have been scared at one time or another in our lives. But a continual journey with fear results in failure to act. The child of God, because of who he serves, cannot afford to "*freeze*" in his activities of the Christian life. The enemy, in many forms, will come to face the Christian. The Christian in the face of such opposition must learn to not fear. Let us hear our Lord on this issue from the New Testament.

Jesus knew that His followers would be faced with persecution. He gave them words to deal with such an event. We read in Matthew 10:28:

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

When the enemies of the Christian arise to face him, those words are the ones we need to hear, "*fear not them....*"

Again in Hebrews 13:6 we read these words:

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper,  
and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

You just cannot quit working for the Lord because people arise who try to destroy your work. Doing God's bidding is the most important thing that any of us can do. So we look to the word and understand the message. We must be strong in the Lord and work. When the opposition arises we must not fear them but continue to work.

In verses 6-10 we find another type of encouragement from God. There is controversy as to what these and other verses in this chapter mean. My understanding of verses 6-10 is the promise of the coming Messiah and the effect of His kingdom among the nations of men. But as to encouragement look at verse 7.

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all  
nations shall come; and I will fill this house with  
glory saith the Lord of hosts.

In just a moment we will see how this applies to the kingdom of Christ. But right now consider this. God was going to fill the house with glory, not man. They were to work and the Lord will handle the business of "*filling the house*." So the issue was not if they had the same material worth as Solomon's temple. God determines worth. It does not matter if we are talking about Solomon's temple or Zerubbabel's.

This principle needs to be understood by God's people. Obedience determines worth in God's eyes. In I Samuel 15:22 we have the confrontation between Samuel and Saul.

And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in  
burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice  
of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice,  
and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Do what God said do in everything. God will bless such an attitude of heart.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Can there be any equation of love that omits obedience? Can we speak in pious terms of the grace of God and neglect to tell men about their need for obedience and

what they must do to obey? The answers to these questions are obvious to students of the Bible.

God wanted the people in Haggai's day to build the temple. God promises to "*fill the house*" with greater glory than the first temple. Get busy and go to work. God will determine the worth.

One writer in the New Testament points back to these words in Haggai 2:6-10 and makes an application to the church. For that reason I make these verses to deal with the temple of Jesus Christ.

Heb 12:27-28 -- "*And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*"

In verse 9 of Haggai 2, God promises to give peace. This is compatible language of Isaiah 2:4.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

How wonderful is the language of Ephesians 2 in talking about Christ and His temple.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. (v. 14).

And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. (v. 17).

In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. (v. 21).

In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the spirit (v. 22).

God dwells among His people in the temple of Jesus Christ. He has filled His temple with glory greater than Solomon. It was not necessary for those in Haggai's day to fully understand why or what he was saying about "*future glory*." Their task was to be strong and work. To the degree that they obeyed, God would bless them.



We now move to verses 10-13 and the questions posed by Haggai. The purpose for the questions was to show the difference between holiness and uncleanness. The two questions were asked of the priest. It is encouraging to see the priest give the right answers to both questions. They were by the nature of their office to have an understanding of the law. The people of God will never rise any higher than the word of God. If that word is neglected either in teaching or practice, the end result will be the demise of God's people. How very encouraging to see these men answer the questions right. The people under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Joshua the high priest and these priest had a very bright future. Their return to fellowship with God could be now brought about by the Word of God.

The first question concerned the priest having "*holy flesh*" in the skirt of his garment. If anything touched that flesh, would it become holy? The answer is no. Holiness could not be imparted by any such method. The people could assemble around the altar but the altar could not impart holiness. These Jews having returned from Babylonian captivity were now dwelling in the land of Israel. But living in this land could not impart holiness to them. Holiness is a result of man obeying God.

The second question had to do with touching of a dead animal. Would anyone who touched the dead animal become unclean? The answer was "*yes.*" One can become unclean by their actions. God was now reminding the people, that their failure to build the temple had resulted in their being unclean. Simply standing at the altar in sacrifice could not change unrepentent people. This is a call by God to remind them of their need of repentance.

In verses 14-17, Haggai reminds them of their failing crops and economy. Since they had ceased to work with and for the Lord, everything they touched came to nought. How could this serve to encourage the people? God, through Haggai, was showing the contrast between obedience and disobedience. Disobedience had brought crop failure, no surplus food; no means to save money and over-all discouragement. The prophet wants them to see, it does not have to be this way. Doing what God said do will result in

their being blessed. Sermons should contain the warnings against sin but also the blessings of response to God's will.

On the 24th day of the ninth month, God gives this tremendous encouragement to the people. In chapter 2:19 we read:

Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

The temple did not have to be finished before God would bless them. From this day indicates God's willingness to bless them because they had begun again the work of the Lord. The earth would now begin to yield her strength. With a surplus of crops, their wealth would also begin to grow. They now have the promise from God of His blessing the fruit of their labor.

Sometimes people foolishly say, *"when I get my life straightened out I will come back to church."* God can bless from the moment of obedience. *"From this day"* God will bless. The young man who returned home in Luke 15 was older and wiser. It was in *"coming to himself"* that the journey toward blessing began. It was in going that he drew near to those blessings. It was arriving back home *"where he belonged that he received the blessing."* *"From that day"* he was blessed by the Father.

The people of God need to be encouraged. Let us hear now the encouragement in the book of Haggai: *"I am with you saith the Lord," "be strong and work," "fear ye not," "from this day I will bless you."* I hope by our understanding of these principles under the law of Christ that we will now rise up and build the temple of the Lord.

# ***Jonah: God's Messenger***

*(Jonah 1:17; 3:1-10)*

**Kenneth McClain**

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And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them (Jonah 3:4-5).

## **Jonah**

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Jonah is first mentioned in II Kings 14:25. The borders of Israel would be extended from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arbath during the reign of Jeroboam II. Jonah's prophecy is connected with the success which attended the efforts of Jeroboam II in restoring the territory of Israel which had been taken by other nations. "*Jonah*" was "*the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.*" Gath-hepher was a few miles northeast of Nazareth in Galilee. Jonah prophesied in the early part of the reign of Jeroboam II (about 786-745 B.C.), or during the period immediately preceding it. He was a preacher of good news for Israel and effective in delivering God's message to Nineveh. However at first, he was unwilling to deliver God's message to Nineveh. He thought God was mistaken at times. Jonah was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. No doubt Jonah's reluctance to preach to Nineveh was based on God restricting Israel from social connections with other nations and Assyria proving herself to tyrannical people.

## **Jonah's Commission**

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The book of Jonah is a simple narration of Jonah being

sent to preach to Nineveh (chief city of Gentile world, a metropolis of Assyria, distinguished equally for magnificence and wickedness). But Jonah went to Joppa and boarded a ship going to Tarshish. Jonah was attempting to get away from the presence of Jehovah. Jonah should have asked, as David did,

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psm. 139:7-10).

It is important to observe that Jonah made no effort to get away from Jehovah as long as he was doing His will. Let us stop and examine ourselves in this respect; are we willing to go where the Lord wants us to go?

## Jonah's Disobedience

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Jonah's duty was very clear; for the word of Jehovah came unto him. God does not speak by direct revelation today as He did in the long ago (I Cor. 13:8; Eph. 4:11-16); God speaks to man today through the inspired Scriptures; and that is why we must study and meditate on His word. God through His Word tells us what He expects of us with reference to the plan of salvation and living the Christian life. Let us not expect a direct call from the Lord, because none will be given. Our obligation to hear and obey the will of the Lord is no less than the people who received direct instruction during Bible times.

Jonah's disobedience in all probability, was his misunderstanding of Jehovah's attitude toward people who were not of the Jewish race. God loves all men, and He originally intended for all men to walk after His commandments; but since sin entered into the world, His covenant has been with His people. God allowed man to choose his own way, but that did not mean He was not interested in him. Jehovah was still interested in those who were not in covenant relationship with Him (I Tim. 3:3-4; II

Pet 9; Acts 10:34-35). People in covenant relationship with God have not always obeyed Him, but God still loved them (Rom. 11:1-4). Jehovah still cared for Israel while they were in sin and wanted them to repent. Jonah, like some of us, was not interested in the disobedience of other nations (Mark 15:16). It seems from Jonah 4:1-2, that the prophet felt that the people of Nineveh might repent; and from Jonah's standpoint, that would be a blow to him and his people. We are certain of one thing, Jonah had made up his mind to disobey God regardless of the cost.

## **Jehovah's Intervention**

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When Jonah boarded the ship at Joppa, he was attempting to flee from the presence of Jehovah, and from his responsibility to go to Nineveh and preach the message Jehovah wanted him to preach. Jonah had allowed sin and rebellion to come into his life (Heb. 2:1-2; I Cor. 4:2; I Cor. 5:10). God may delay His judgments, but He will not overlook any sin in the lives of His people (II Pet. 3:8-10). Genesis 6:1-8 tells of Jehovah waiting long in Noah's time. A day of reckoning is coming (Acts 17:30-31; Heb. 10:26-31).

Jonah's attempt to get away from Jehovah was foolish. There were two roads open to Jonah, namely, Nineveh -- the road of fellowship with God, and within the circle of His will; and Tarshish -- the road of rebelling against God; and on this road he would have to walk without the fellowship of God whom he was disobeying. There are two roads open to us: There is the road to Nineveh, that is our duty wherever it leads; and then there is Tarshish -- the road of have-your-own-way, do as you please, an easy road. Let us pray to our heavenly Father that He will prevent us through His providence from traveling the road to Tarshish, the way of disobedience.

The spiritual condition of Jonah was sad because he could go to sleep so easily and quickly while disobeying God. Jonah had made up his mind to go against the will of God, so he was at ease. There is hope for the man whose disobedience causes him unrest and grief; but a sad day for

the man who can face the future undisturbed by his disobedience (I Sam. 15:13-14; Luke 15:29). Often members of the church are indifferent toward the work of the Lord in a local sense. For example, am I indifferent when it comes to Bible school? Am I indifferent when it comes to mid-week meeting of the church? Am I indifferent when it comes to visiting the sick, the needy, the indifferent, and the new members? In short, does Christianity cost us anything?

Jehovah did not permit Jonah to run away from Him. Jehovah "*hurled*" a storm into the sea to prevent Jonah from running away from his responsibility. Like Jonah, many of the seemingly hard things which may happen to us may be but the workings of a kindly Providence, in an effort to bring us back on the right way (Rom. 8:28).

The attitude of the mariners was better than that of Jonah. They wanted to do the right thing (in saving Jonah's life), while the prophet was not concerned for the lives of those who lived in Nineveh. Jonah did not care for those outside God's elect or family. What about us? Do we care about those outside the family of God, the church?

Jonah's conscience was slumbering, not dead. He knew that the trouble the mariners were experiencing was due to his unfaithfulness; and when Jonah was confronted with what should be done, he gave an answer which would punish him and save them. But the mariners did not want to cast the prophet into the sea, so they tried desperately to reach the land without taking the life of a human being; but their efforts were in vain. They prayed earnestly unto Jehovah, the God of Jonah; and after trying every conceivable means to save the ship, the sailors finally followed Jonah's suggestion and cast him overboard; and then like a hungry monster which had received its prey, the sea was still.

God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah and save his life. So Jonah was saved from certain death. In chapter 2:9 we read: "*And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*" The book of Jonah was not written that we might learn about whales, but to learn about God's great love for all men. There are many great lessons to be learned in the Book of Jonah.

## Jehovah Speaks Again To Jonah

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In giving Jonah a second commission, Jehovah makes no reference to the first one. Jonah was given another opportunity to go to Nineveh. No doubt, Jonah was in a much better mood to obey God the second time than he was the first. The first time the prophet was told to go to Nineveh and deliver his message, he disobeyed and went in the other direction. Jonah had not gone very far before the Lord arrested him; and after being in the whale (three days) Jonah found himself back at the place from which he had started. Jonah's heart was still the same; but he learned that no one can flee from Jehovah's presence. Thus far, Jonah has not learned the lesson that God's people must love the lost of this world.

The message which God gave to Jonah had not been changed -- *"preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."* The prophet was to earnestly cry against Nineveh in such a way as to cause the people of Nineveh to believe his message.

There are many souls who are asleep or dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-10), not knowing or perhaps not caring of the sad state that they are in. We must preach in such a way as to awaken any sleeping soul. God's message (gospel) must be preached or delivered in a manner which suggests that it is an important message. However, I am not suggesting that we do the type of preaching as some do today; the noisy, blustering, screaming, ranting kind which manifests disorder; and not the inspired word of God that can save the lost.

Jonah's mission to Nineveh was probably between 800 and 880 B.C. The destruction of the Assyrian capital was probably in the period of 608-606 B.C., which would be about one hundred seventy-five years after Jonah's preaching. The date of the Book of Jonah is not so important, but the message is.

In Genesis 10:9-11, we find the city of Nineveh was founded by Nimrod, and was located on the east bank of the Tigris river. It was the capital of the Assyrian empire and the size may be gathered from the statement found in the text: *"an exceeding great city, of three day's journey"* (Jonah

3:3). *"Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle"* (Jonah 4:11). The three day's journey of Jonah across the city or the principle streets and lanes is not clear; but one thing is clear. It was a great undertaking and his preaching was confined to a single statement, *"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."* The Israelites, over the years, developed an attitude of hatred and bitterness toward other nations and had little or no interest in their spiritual welfare. The Israelites thought of Jehovah as their own, and His main concern was for them. The Book of Jonah was intended to correct their narrow viewpoint. This book pictures God's love for all people, and His desire that all men should be brought to repentance (I Tim. 2:3-4; II Pet. 3:9). Is our attitude toward people outside the church any better than that of Jonah? No book in the Old Testament tells more of God's concern for the lost than the Book of Jonah.

## **The People Of Nineveh Responded To Jonah's Message**

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The people of Nineveh believed the message of Jonah. They believed Jonah was speaking for God. So their faith like ours came by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). Faith alone did not save the people of Nineveh. They had a working faith, and it was shown by great humiliation and fasting and sackcloth. Jesus said the people of Nineveh *"repented at the preaching of Jonah"* (Matt. 12:41). Faith comes when God's word is preached and repentance follows. Often men reverse this order.

Jonah's message reached the king himself. It was the king who took the lead in ordering universal humiliation all throughout the entire city (Job 2:8; Ezek. 27:30). The king *"proclaimed and published through Nineveh"* that *"man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God."* It seems the custom was to let the animals share in man's outward demonstration of humiliation.

Not only did the people of Nineveh fast, wear sackcloth and cry mightily unto God; but their faith led them



to turn from their evil ways. They brought forth fruit worthy of repentance (cf. Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). Jonah 3:9 implies the king had no special word or encouragement that God would spare Nineveh as a result of their demonstrating humility. This shows they had remarkable faith (cf. Luke 7:9). They did their part in correcting their wrong doing, and then trusted in God's mercy.

## Jehovah's Love For The Lost

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It appears that Jonah's message to Nineveh was utter destruction, regardless of what they might or might not do. That may have been the only way to awaken them from a sinful condition. Jehovah's purpose was to punish them because of sin; but when they turned from sin, a new relationship which was not in Jonah's message, came into being (cf. Tit. 3:3-7). They turned from their evil ways, so Jehovah spared the city.

When the Ninevites turned from their evil ways, God turned from the destruction intended for them (cf. I Sam. 15:29; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). God sparing Nineveh from the jaws of destruction, shows the willingness to forgive on God's part.

When the Bible says that God repented Himself, we must understand it to mean he changed His attitude and conduct toward the Ninevites. This change in the Divine attitude and conduct was based on the change of the Ninevites; and thus speaking after manner of men, it says Jehovah repented.

Jehovah's love for the lost can be seen in Genesis 6:5-7 when *"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth...and it grieved him at his heart."* Also, his love can be seen in his *"longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (II Pet. 3:9).

# *Obadiah's Vision Of Edom*

Roy Deaver

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## I. BACKGROUND

In Jeremiah 49:7-22 we have the following reading:

Concerning Edom, thus saith the Lord of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him. If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. For thus saith the Lord: Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it. For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes. I have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. Also, Edom shall be a desolation: every one

that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me? Therefore here the counsel of the Lord, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their inhabitants desolate with them.

In Psalms 137, verse 7, we have the following: *"Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundations thereof."*

Then, in Ezekiel 25:12-14 we have:

Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it: and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord.

Isaac and Rebekah were the parents of twin boys, Esau and Jacob. God said to Rebekah: *"Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels..."* (Gen. 25:23). Esau became a cunning hunter, a man of the field. Jacob was a plain man, *"dwelling in tents."* *"And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob"* (Gen. 25:28).

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he desired to pronounce the patriarchal

blessing upon Esau -- this in spite of God's plain declaration recorded in Genesis 23:23. Rebekah heard Isaac talking with Esau about the blessing, and she was determined that the special blessing would go to Jacob. Jacob joined his mother in a conspiracy designed to cause Isaac to pronounce the blessing upon Jacob. The conspiracy was successful, and Isaac blessed Jacob. *"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob."* Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away, to the land of Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, the father of Rebekah, to take a wife from the daughters of Laban, Rebekah's brother.

The descendants of Jacob were the Israelites; the descendants of Esau were the Edomites. The Land of Edom was a rugged mountainous mass which extended about one hundred miles from the River Arnon, the southern boundary of Moab, as far south as the Gulf of Aqabah. It was situated south of the Dead Sea, and encompassed about two thousand square miles. It included Mount Seir, the city of Sela (which became Petra), and the towns of Bozrah and Teman. It was a proud, haughty, strong, wealthy nation. Throughout its history it was the implacable enemy of the descendants of Jacob. Jacob and Esau were reconciled; but their descendants, NEVER!

In the progress of the great wilderness journey, Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom. The message was:

Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us....Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left hand, until we have passed thy borders.

The king of Edom said:

Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword....Thus Edom refused to Israel passage through his border.

Israel was forced to make a long detour to the south. Here is

a clear illustration of the hatred which the Edomites had for the Israelites.

As is recorded in Numbers 24:18, the prophet Balaam prophesied that Edom would become subordinate to Israel: *"And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly."* In fact, before the twins were born, God Himself said to Rebekah: *"....and the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob)."*

The New Testament -- Hebrews 12:16 -- calls Esau a *"profane person."* For one bowl of food, Esau sold his *"birthright."* We need to understand that this *"birthright"* was something of great importance. (1) It included the right of *"primogeniture"* -- the right of the firstborn to receive a double portion of the father's earthly possessions. (2) It included the right to pass this blessing on to his own posterity. (3) It included the right and the obligation to become the religious leader of his people. (4) It included the right of custodianship of the great Abrahamic covenant.

The word *"profane"* is the translation of the Greek hebalos (the adjective) and hebaloo (the verb). It means: (1) the very opposite of *"holy,"* and *"sacred,"* *"clean,"* and *"devout."* (2) that which lacks all relationship or affinity to God (Vine, page 217). (3) *"unfit to enter the temple."* (4) failure to have and to exercise proper concern about spiritual things. (5) being *"this world"* oriented, rather than *"that world"* oriented. (6) being *"conformed"* to this world, rather than being *"transformed"* to this world.

Barclay says: *"It was applied to Jews who had become renegades and apostates and who had forsaken God."* Westcott says: *"....it describes the man whose mind recognizes nothing higher than earth; for whom nothing is sacred; who has no divine reverence for the unseen."* The word describes a life which is without any proper awareness of or interest in God. Its thoughts, its aims, its pleasures, its standards -- are completely earth bound.

Remember that with reference to their descendants, God said: *"I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau"* (Mal. 1:1,2, and quoted by Paul in Rom. 9:13).

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of

Herod the king. Some time later -- probably about two years later -- through the Wisemen from the east Herod learned about the birth of Jesus. Herod was troubled, *"and all Jerusalem with him."* Claiming that he wanted to go and to worship the child, Herod sought to learn the exact location of the child. But, the wisemen, being warned by God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, departed into their own country another way. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, *"Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."* Joseph did as he was instructed. When Herod saw that he *"was mocked of the Wisemen"* he was mad -- he was exceedingly mad! He *"sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had exactly learned of the Wisemen."*

I am still talking about the hatred which existed between the descendants of Esau and the descendants of Jacob. The Lord was a descendant of JACOB; Herod was a descendant of Esau.

## II. Obadiah's Prophecy The Destruction Of Edom

### ~~~~~ PART ONE: EDOM WILL BE DESTROYED (1-16).

I. The Heathen Nations are Instructed to take vengeance upon Edom (1-9).

1. God has sent a messenger to arouse the nations against Edom;
2. God says to Edom:
  - (1) I have made thee small among the heathen
  - (2) Thou art greatly despised
  - (3) You are deceived by your haughtiness and pride
  - (4) You are deceived by your geographic location
  - (5) You are deceived by your power and your wealth

- (6) You ask: *"Who will bring me down to the ground?"* and I answer: *"Though you soar aloft like the eagle, and though you make your nest among the stars -- I will bring you down."*
  - (7) If thieves and robbers came into your midst they would not steal everything; and if grapegatherers came to steal your grapes, they would leave some grapes. But, YOU, EDOM, you will be completely, thoroughly, destroyed. Even your *"hidden treasures"* will be taken.
  - (8) Your own allies have pushed you to the border -- they have deceived you.
  - (9) Your intimate friends -- those eating your bread -- have prevailed over you and have placed a trap under you without your knowing it.
  - (10) I will destroy your wise men out of Edom, and cause your mighty men to be filled with terror. Every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.
- II. God explains WHY Edom is to be destroyed (10-14).
1. God stresses: Because--
    - (1) Of your violence against your brother Jacob, shame will overwhelm you, and you will be cut off forever
    - (2) On the day when forgiveness entered into Judah and carried off their possessions--  
**YOU STOOD ALOOF!**
    - (3) When foreigners cast lots for Jerusalem,  
**YOU WERE AS ONE OF THEM!**
  2. God stresses several things which Edom **SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE**. He says:
    - (1) You should not have just *"looked on"* in the day of your brother's distress
    - (2) You should not have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction
    - (3) You should not have spoken proudly

in the day of their distress

- (4) You should not have entered into the gate of MY PEOPLE in the day of their calamity
- (5) You should not have taken pleasure in seeing the misery of my people in the day of their misfortune
- (6) You should not have reached out your hands to take your brother's possessions in the day of his calamity
- (7) You should not have stood at the passages in order to cut off those who were trying to escape
- (8) You should not have delivered up the survivors in the day of distress

III. God explains further Edom's destruction (15,16).

- 1. The day of the Lord is near, upon all the nations, including Edom.
- 2. As you have done to others, so shall it be done to you -- your doings will come back upon your own head.
- 3. As the nations, including Edom, have persecuted my people, so shall they be dealt with and *"they shall be as though they had not been"*

**PART TWO: THERE WOULD BE A**

**RESTORATION (17-21).**

- I. God's people would return to their homes and to their lands
  - 1. Exiles from the Northern Kingdom would return from captivity
  - 2. Exiles from the Southern Kingdom would return from captivity
  - 3. They would dwell in the lands in which they formerly dwelt
  - 4. They would dwell in the lands formerly occupied by Edom
  - 5. Jacob and Joseph would be a fire; the house of Esau would be stubble



6. The house of Esau would not have a single survivor

## II. Upon return from the Captivity--

1. The important mountain would be MOUNTAIN ZION, not Mount Esau
2. In Mount Zion--
  - (1) There would be "*deliverance*"
  - (2) There would be "*holiness*"
  - (3) There would be "*unity*" -- the twelve tribes would again be one people
  - (4) There would be the promised blessings
  - (5) There would be the total "*devouring*" of the house of Esau
  - (6) There would be "*saviors*"--deliverers
  - (7) The Kingdom shall be the Lord's

SPECIAL NOTE: Though God, through Obadiah, spoke in particular of better days ahead for His Old Testament people (cf. Jer. 31:31-34), the prophecy reaches out to include the Christ, the Gospel, the Church -- New Testament Christianity. MOUNT ZION is the CHURCH OF OUR LORD (Heb. 12:18-28).

## In the CHURCH OF THE LORD--

- (1) There is "*deliverance*" from sins
- (2) There is "*holiness*"
- (3) There is the "*unity*" among all those who truly believe upon the Christ
- (4) There are the promised blessings -- every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3)
- (5) There is constant fighting against all that is represented by EDOM
- (6) There are the faithful messengers of the gospel
- (7) There is recognition of the facts
  - (1) that the Kingdom is HERE, and
  - (2) that it belongs to the Christ.

### III. Lessons

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1. The word "*Obadiah*" means "*Servant of Jehovah.*" Every faithful child of God is a "*Servant of Jehovah.*" Paul referred to himself as being "*a servant of Jesus Christ*" (Rom. 1:1). He says (in Rom. 1:9), "*For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his son,...*" As servants of Christ: (1) We belong to Him, having been purchased by His blood. (2) We seek to accomplish His will. (3) We are obligated (and privileged) to be faithful to Him. (4) We partake of the blessings which He graciously bestows -- as forgiveness of sins, membership in His spiritual body -- the church, the privilege and obligation of working together with Him in accomplishing His will, the marvelous hope of life when this life is over, Christian fellowship with all the faithful, every spiritual blessing. May God help us to be faithful servants.

2. We have emphasis upon the sin of putting material things first in our lives. The Edomites descended from Esau. Esau was a "*profane*" person. That is, he was NOT properly concerned about matters spiritual. Rather, he was "*this world*" oriented. Because of God's revealed attitude toward the descendants of Esau we conclude that they, too, were of the same attitude, disposition, and conduct. The Lord said: "*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt. 6:25). The Lord said further: "*Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*" Then, the Lord said: "*But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. 6:33). Paul declares: "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows*" (I Tim. 6:10).

3. As indicated in the preceding point, we pick up the lesson also that God must come first in our lives. Because of who He is and what He is, we must live our lives in subjection to Him, and must do all things to His glory. The Record says: "*....and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with*

*all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"* (Mark 12:30).

4. The book of Obadiah emphasizes in a special way the fact that God does keep His promises. Because of Edom's sins, which are clearly specified, God determined the absolute, complete destruction of the nation of Edom. This is the message which He announced through Obadiah. God said: *"...and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it"* (v. 18). God said: *"....to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter"* (v. 9). Edom's destruction was foretold also by Jeremiah, by Joel, and by Amos. Through the work of many (in particular, the Nabateans, Judas Maccabeus, John Hyrcanus) the Edomites have ceased to be. One of the great evidences of the Miraculous nature of the Bible is the study of Prophecy made and Prophecy fulfilled. In no instance is this point more emphatic than in the case of the desolation of Edom. *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise...."* (II Pet. 3:9).

5. Paul said to the brethren of Galatia: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal"* (Gal. 6:7-8). Esau himself illustrates this principle. Also, this principle is clearly stressed to the Edomites. God said to them: *"As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head"* (v. 15).

6. Men need to learn, to know, to respect the fact that God rules in the affairs of men. God rules ultimately over the nations. It is God who ordained the principle of human governments. *"Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding...."* (Dan. 2:20-21). Then, in Daniel 4:17 we have: *"The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to*

whomsoever he will, and setteth up the lowest of men." The Psalmist said: "*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*" (Psm. 9:17). "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord....*" (Psm. 33:12).

7. Another lesson: Obadiah stresses the sin and the danger of thinking that our safety -- our security -- is dependent upon our human alliances. The men of Edom's confederacy had turned against her. The men that were at peace with Edom had deceived her, and had prevailed against her. Those people who ate of Edom's bread had set a snare under her, without Edom's understanding it. Edom's alliances would be of no benefit to her in her time of need.

And, we need to learn well the lesson taught. The strength of this or of any nation lies in its military might and power -- necessary though these may be. The real strength of any nation is its righteousness. The Bible and all history declare that when a nation becomes so wicked, so corrupt, that it no longer is fit to stand -- then, somehow, in God's power and providence that nation is no longer allowed to exist. May we read again Psalm 9:17 -- "*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*"

8. In our pondering God's message to Edom we learn the sin of standing "*aloof*." There were countless numbers of times in Israel's history when their brother Edom could have been of real help to her. But, Edom hated Israel. Edom did not want things to go well for Israel. Edom simply "*stood on the other side*." Or, as the footnote reads: "*stood aloof*." The person who wants to be right with God cannot -- in the presence of sin and/or injustice -- simply "*stand aloof*." God demands that we do something -- that we do what we can. In the judgment, to some the Lord will say: "*I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.*" To these the Lord will further say: "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal life which is prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matt. 25:41-43). The Record still teaches: "*...and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them*" (Eph. 5:11). I have no right to keep quiet. I have no right to refuse to get

involved. I have no right to try to stand "aloof."

9. From God's message to Edom we learn the sin of placing our trust and our confidence in things that are temporal. Neither Edom's alliances, nor her natural geographic advantages, nor her noted wise men, nor her strength, nor her wealth -- could prevent her destruction, once God had determined that she would be destroyed. All these things were temporal. Paul says: *"...while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (II Cor. 4:18).

10. We learn also about the sin and danger of forming sinful associations. Paul says: *"Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals."* The person who thinks otherwise is simply deceived. May we ponder well Proverbs 13:20 -- *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."*

11. Another lesson: we are reminded of the fact that to fight against God's people is to incur the wrath of God. In their attitude and conduct toward Israel, the Edomites brought with themselves the wrath of God. As pictured for us in Revelation 6:9-11 the souls *"underneath the altar"* were crying out: *"How long, O Master, the Holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?"* They did not ask whether or not God would deal with their persecutors. Their question was: *"When?"* Saul of Tarsus persecuted the disciples of the Lord. He persecuted *"the Way."* He persecuted *"the saints."* The Lord said to Saul: *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"* Even though Saul of Tarsus would genuinely repent of his sins, and obey the gospel of the Christ, and become a faithful, devoted, servant of the Lord -- yet, at least in some ways, he would still suffer consequences of his sins. He would be troubled -- disturbed exceedingly -- because of what he had done. He would suffer persecution. The Lord, in talking to Ananias of Damascus, said: *"...for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake"* (Acts 9:16). And, those today, who persecute the church of our Lord bring upon themselves the wrath of God. And, except they repent of their sins and turn to God in God's way --

they will suffer eternal punishment.

12. In God's great message through the prophet Obadiah we are reminded also of the sin and the foolishness of putting our confidence in human wisdom. We must be rightly concerned about the "*wisdom that is from above*" (James 3:17). We must seek to have the wisdom that comes through prayer and the diligent study of God's word. But, we must make no alliances with "*earthly wisdom.*" "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*" (Prov. 3:5-6).

For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

I will destroy the wisdom of the  
wise, And the discernment of the  
discerning will I bring to nought.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. Seeing that the Jews ask for signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men (I Cor. 1:18-25).

Then, in Jeremiah 9:23-24 we have:

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

13. God's message through Obadiah also calls our attention to the fact that we are not to place our trust, our

confidence, in material wealth. Paul instructed Timothy as follows:

Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hopes set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy... (I Tim. 6:17).

14. The very theme of our lectureship is: A RETURN UNTO JEHOVAH. Edom is an illustration of the fact that a person and/or a nation can reach the point of no return -- a point at which there can be no repentance. It is recorded so many times in the book of Judges that when the Israelites realized their sins, cried unto the Lord, showed some evidence of repentance, that God heard their cries, and raised up deliverers. The time came when God saith unto them: "*Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more*" (Judges 10:13). Hebrews 6:4-6 describes just such apostates.

For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

15. God, through the prophet Obadiah, spake of the Church, and of the consequent blessings. He made reference to "*mount Zion*." But, according to Hebrews 12:18-28 mount Zion symbolizes the New Testament church. Those who are "*in Christ*" have come unto "*mount Zion*." In mount Zion there would be "*deliverance*." In mount Zion there would be "*holiness*." In mount Zion there would be the blessings God had promised -- blessings to be had IN the Christ, IN the CHURCH of the Christ, upon the TERMS of the GOSPEL OF THE CHRIST. In Zion there would be constant war against all persons and all things symbolized by Edom. In Zion there would be "*deliverers*" -- messengers of the gospel.

## Conclusion

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Brethren, these are some of the great lessons set forth

in God's message to Edom, delivered through the prophet Obadiah. And, in the light of New Testament teaching, we need to write these lessons deeply upon the tablets of our minds. Especially, we pray that God will help us all to work diligently to try to reach both alien sinners and erring children of God, before these reach the point of no return -- the point beyond which there can be no turning or re-turning to God.



# *Elijah, A Courageous Prophet*

Roy Deaver

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## Background

As God brings to a close the Old Testament story, He makes specific reference to the fact that He will again send the prophet Elijah. God says,

I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Mal. 4:5-6).

In Luke 1:16-17 the angel talked to Zacharias about the coming birth of John the Baptizer. Among other things, the angel said,

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God. And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.

As is recorded for us in Matthew 11:10-14, the Lord spake of John the Baptizer. The Lord said, *"This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way before thee."* The Lord continued,

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: Yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force. For all

the prophets and the law prophesied unto John. And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, that is to come.

Then, in James 5:16-18, we have the following reading:

Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

May we note carefully: (1) Elijah is here set forth as being a righteous man. (2) He is here set forth as being a man of God. (3) He is here set forth as being a man of prayer. (4) He is here set forth as being a person like the rest of us -- a man of like passions with us. (5) He is set forth in sacred Scriptures as being an example for us in our praying -- an example selected by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, both the Old Testament and the New Testament recognize and emphasize the greatness of one of the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. They recognize him as being one of the greatest men who ever lived. In so many ways he was so very much like the prophet Moses. While recognizing and appreciating the many noble characteristics of this wonderful servant of God, it is our responsibility at present to consider: *"Elijah, the Courageous Prophet."*

It was in the fourth dynasty of Omri, in the reign of his son Ahab, that idolatry became so rampant in Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and Ahab joined his wife in serving and in worshipping Baal. Jezebel worked with evangelistic zeal and fervor in behalf of Baal worship. Ahab *"reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria."* Ahab *"...did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him"* (I Kings 16:33). The record says,

But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very

abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel (I Kings 21:25-26).

It was into the life of this wicked nation, this wicked King, and this wicked Queen that God sent the great prophet Elijah.

## I. Elijah's First Visit To Ahab

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The courage of Elijah is clearly seen in his first visit to Ahab. Elijah, talking to the king of Israel, said: *"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."*

God instructed Elijah to leave, to turn eastward, to hide himself by the brook Cherith, near the Jordan. God promised Elijah: (1) thou shalt drink of the brook; (2) I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

So, Elijah did as God instructed him. The Record says:

So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan.

Ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and they brought him bread and flesh in the evening. He drank water from the brook. In time, the brook dried up, and God instructed Elijah to go to the home of the widow of Zarephath. There, God sustained Elijah, the widow, and her son, by the barrel of meal that *"did not waste"* and the *"cruse of oil"* that did not fail. There was no dew nor rain for three years and six months. This fact is mentioned by the Lord in Luke 4:25.

## II. The Second Visit To Ahab

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The courage of Elijah is clearly seen in Elijah's next visit to Ahab. *"After many days"* -- that is, in the third year of no rain -- God said to Elijah: *"Go show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth"* (I Kings 18:1). *"And there was a sore famine in the land."*

Ahab had a servant who was named *"Obadiah,"* who was the governor over Ahab's house. In spite of his position

in the house of Ahab, Obadiah was a man who "*feared*" the God of Israel -- he believed in and respected the one true God. In fact, when wicked Jezebel undertook the extermination of the prophets of Jehovah (probably as a response to the fact of the drought announced by Elijah) Obadiah "*...took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water*" (I Kings. 18:4, 13).

The drought situation was so serious that King Ahab himself, and his servant Obadiah, were personally going throughout the land, searching for water and for grass in order to saved the horses and the mules. Ahab went one way, and Obadiah went another. As Obadiah was in his search for the water and grass, Elijah met him. Obadiah knew Elijah, fell on his face before Elijah, and said: "*Art thou my lord Elijah?*" Elijah said, "*I am. So, tell Ahab, Behold, Elijah is here.*" Obadiah did not like the idea, and explained his position to Elijah. Obadiah said,

What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my Lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he will slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.

Obadiah told Elijah what he had done to save one hundred prophets of Jehovah. Obadiah said further: "*And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.*" Elijah said: "*As the lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him this day.*" So, Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him: "*Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*" Elijah responded: "*I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast*

*followed Baalim.*" It took courage -- tremendous courage -- for Elijah to go to King Ahab, and to talk with him face to face. It took courage for Elijah to stress to Ahab that HE, King Ahab, was the troubler of Israel. It took courage for Elijah to make the specific charges against Ahab: (1) You are following the ways of your father (who *"did worse than all that were before him"*); (2) You have forsaken the commandments of the Lord; (3) You have introduced, practiced, and encouraged the worship of Baal.

SPECIAL NOTE: There are many in the church today to whom we would like to say: (1) You are following the ways of the false teachers who have gone before you. (2) You have forsaken the commandments of the Lord. (3) You have encouraged and are now encouraging false doctrines and sinful worship.

### III. Elijah On Mount Carmel

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It took courage for Elijah (1) to instruct the King, (2) to set out the details, and (3) to execute the events with regards to the great, unforgettable, happenings to take place on Mount Carmel.

In absolute calmness, and courage, and faith, and dignity, Elijah said to Ahab:

Now therefore send, and gather to me ALL ISRAEL unto Mount Carmel. Gather together four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Gather together all the four hundred prophets of the Asherah.

The text explains that all these eight hundred and fifty prophets were sustained (provided for) by Jezebel. Ahab did as he was instructed. He *"...sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel."*

Elijah came to all the people. He said: *"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."* The people *"answered him not a word."* Elijah said unto the people:

I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them

choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.

And all the people answered and said, it is well spoken.

The great challenge (the reasonableness of which was obvious) had been issued and had been accepted.

Elijah then spake directly to the prophets of Baal. Elijah said:

Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us.

But there was no voice, nor any that answered.

The people leaped about the altar that was made.

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

The worshippers

...cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then, it was Elijah's turn. He had been calm. He had been patient. He had given them every possible opportunity to do all that they wanted to do or could do. Elijah said to the people: "*Come near unto me.*" And all the people came near unto him. He repaired the ALTAR OF THE LORD THAT

WAS BROKEN DOWN. What a sad, pathetic, tragic, state of affairs! Even the very altar originally built for worship unto the one true God, was broken down! Then, Elijah *"took twelve stones, according to the number of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name."* With the stones Elijah built an altar in the name of the Lord. He made a trench about the altar -- a large trench. He put wood in order, cut the bullock in pieces, and laid the bullock on the wood. He then said: *"Fill the barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt offering, and on the wood."* It was done. Elijah said: *"Do it the second time."* And, it was done the second time. Elijah said: *"Do it a third time."* *"And they did it the third time."* The water ran round about the altar. The trench also was filled with water.

And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. Elijah said to them: Take the prophet of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Ahab was there. Ahab saw and heard all that had taken place. Elijah said to King Ahab: *"Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain."* Ahab went up to eat and to drink. Elijah went up to the top of mount Carmel. Elijah *"...cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees."* Elijah said to his servant: *"Go up now, look toward the sea."* The servant went up, and looked, and then reported: *"There is nothing."* Elijah said: *"Go again*

seven times." The servant did so. This time, when he returned, he said: *"Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."* Elijah said: *"Go up, say to Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."* *"And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and THERE WAS A GREAT RAIN. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."*

*"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword."* *"Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time."* Elijah must have thought that *"Surely, God has -- at Mount Carmel -- rendered a death-blow to Baalism."* But, he was so terribly disappointed. When he saw the messenger of Jezebel, and heard the message, *"he arose, and went for his life."* Elijah went to Beersheba, which belonged to Judah. This was about ninety-five miles from Jezreel. Elijah left his servant in Beersheba, and he, himself, went *"a day's journey into the wilderness."* Elijah *"came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die."* He prayed: *"It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."* *"And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was a cake on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again."* *"And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee."* It is obvious that Elijah was exhausted. He needed food, sleep, and rest. *"And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."* At Horeb, Elijah lodged in a cave. *"...and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?"* Elijah said: *"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy*



*covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." God said: "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." God caused Elijah to see and to hear (1) a great strong wind that "rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks"; (2) then an earthquake, and (3) after the earthquake, a fire; and (4) after the fire, a still small voice. Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle, and stood in the entrance of the cave. God said to Elijah: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." "And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-me-ho-lah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room." God was thus explaining to Elijah: (1) that He -- God -- was not through with the problem from which Elijah had fled, the problem in Israel; (2) that he -- Elijah -- had had no right to flee when he did; (3) that he -- Elijah -- had no right to be where he was; (4) that he -- God -- had more work for him to do. God explained further that the situation was not exactly as Elijah thought it was. God said: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel all the knees of which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."*

#### IV. Elijah And Naboth's Vineyard

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It took tremendous courage for Elijah to denounce the terrible sins of Ahab and Jezebel in the matter of Naboth's vineyard.

Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, close to the palace of King Ahab. Ahab wanted the vineyard. He wanted to trade with Naboth for the vineyard, or to buy the vineyard. Naboth said to Ahab: "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." Ahab

was so terribly disappointed. He went home, laid down upon his bed, *"turned away his face,"* and *"refused to eat."* In other words, he pouted. Jezebel came in. She said: *"Why are you so sad? why do you refuse to eat?"* Ahab explained how desperately he wanted Naboth's vineyard, and that Naboth had refused to sell or trade. Jezebel said: *"Are you not king of Israel? Get up! Eat bread. Be merry. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth."*

So, Jezebel wrote official letters, in Ahab's name, sealed them with the official seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles in the city of Naboth. She said: (1) proclaim a fast; (2) set Naboth *"on high among the people"*; (3) set two wicked men before Naboth; (4) have these wicked men bear witness against Naboth, saying, *"Thou didst blaspheme God and the king"*; (5) then, carry Naboth out and stone him, that he may die. The men of the city, even the elders and nobles, did as Jezebel had instructed them. They sent word to Jezebel that Naboth was dead. Jezebel went to Ahab and said: *"Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is dead."*

Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth, to take possession of it. *"And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it."* God said: *"You tell Ahab, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? Thus saith the Lord: In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."* Elijah continued: *"And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."* In I Kings 22 and in II Kings 9 we have the records of the exact, gruesome, detailed, fulfillment of these prophecies of Elijah.

## V. Elijah And Ahaziah

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Furthermore, it took great courage for Elijah to take a message from God, to Ahaziah, that Ahaziah would die.

Ahaziah, son of Ahab, and who succeeded his father to the throne in Israel, fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick. He sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, as to whether or not he would recover. Meanwhile, the angel of the Lord said to Elijah:

Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

Elijah departed.

The messengers returned to Ahaziah, explained what had happened, and reported the words which they had heard. Ahaziah said: *"What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words?"* They said: *"He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins."* Ahaziah said: *"It is Elijah the Tishbite."*

The king sent to Elijah a *"captain of fifty"* with his fifty men. They came to Elijah as he sat on the top of an hill. The captain said: *"Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down."* Elijah said: *"If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty."* Fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

Ahaziah sent another captain, with another fifty men. The captain said: *"O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly."* Elijah said: *"If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty."* And fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty men.

Ahaziah sent again a third captain, with another fifty men. This captain came to Elijah, and fell on his knees before Elijah, and said to him: *"O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight."* *"And the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the King."* Elijah said: *"Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no*

*God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die."* The Record says simply: *"So he died according to the word which Elijah had spoken."*

## VI. Courage -- What Does It Mean?

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It is in order that we give brief attention to the meaning of courage. It is clearly demonstrated in the life and work of Elijah -- but what exactly does it mean? Is there any evidence that Elijah was ever fearful?

Paul said to the brethren of Corinth, *"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"* (I Cor. 2:3). Paul asked the Ephesian brethren to pray for him *"...that I might speak boldly, as I ought to speak"* (Eph. 6:20). In Acts 20:19 Paul refers to his *"...serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews."* He mentions in verse 22 that *"the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."* But, he continues: *"...none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24). Plots, sufferings, persecutions, threats against his life -- nothing would keep him from faithfulness in preaching the gospel of Christ.

When Elijah saw the messenger from Jezebel and heard the message from Jezebel, *"he arose, and went for his life."* He failed to wait for directions from God. He reached the point in which he prayed, *"O Lord, take away my life."* In connection with God's instructions for Ahaziah, God said to Elijah: *"Go down with him; be not afraid of him."* There must have been some reason for this word of encouragement. The Holy Spirit says of Elijah that he was *"a man subject to like passions as we are"* (James 5:17). Yes, there were times -- likely many, many times -- in which Elijah was afraid.

This leads us to emphasize that courage does not mean the absence of fear. Rather, it means the conquest of fear. It

means the character and quality and strength which enables and compels one to do what has to be done -- in spite of the fear. Courage will enable a servant of God to do his job honorably and well, in spite of any and all fear. I read about a woman who -- with an ax -- killed a bear, when the bear attacked the woman's baby. Now, everybody knows that a woman can not kill a bear with an ax! But SHE DID! That's courage! It takes tremendous courage to do the thing which we fear to do, but which we know simply has to be done. Courage enables one to press on -- to keep on pressing on -- even when the going is rough. *"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."*

## Conclusion

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We have considered *"Elijah, A Courageous Prophet."* We have glanced at the courage of Elijah as demonstrated (1) in his first visit to Ahab; (2) in his second visit to Ahab; (3) on Mount Carmel; and (4) in the matter of Naboth's vineyard. Also, (5) we have called attention to the real meaning of courage.

May God help us always, in our efforts to be His faithful servants, to have the courage of Elijah, the courage of John the Baptizer, the courage of the Christ, the courage of Stephen, the courage of Peter and John, the courage of Paul. May we ever pray fervently (and ask others to pray for us) that we may at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, *"speak boldly as we ought to speak."* And, may God help us always to have the courage to LIVE as we ought to live. May we continue to study and to learn from and to live with this great courageous prophet of God.

# ***Prophecies Of Judgment And Blessings The Book Of Zephaniah***

**Kenneth Burleson**

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## **Introduction**

Zephaniah prophesied in the days of Josiah, king of Judah. He was the great-great-grandson of "*Hezekiah*" ("*Hezekiah*" ASV) (Zeph. 1:1). If this Hezekiah was the king of Judah by that name then Zephaniah was of royal blood and also a relative of the present king.

Josiah began his reign at the age of eight and reigned for 31 years. He was king from 639 B.C. to 608 B.C. Josiah was preceded by one of the most wicked kings to reign over Judah, Manasseh. A great reformation was wrought during Josiah's reign in which Zephaniah was a prime mover.

Zephaniah delivered the message of God. His message was to warn of impending destruction, and to admonish them to repent and promised blessing for those who would endure. This prophecy was spoken only a few years before Judah's day of doom came.

## **The Prophet Warns Of The Coming Destruction Of Jerusalem, Judah, And The Gentile Nations** *(Zeph. 1:1-18; 2:4-15)*

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Zephaniah illustrates the great principle of which Paul

wrote, *"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God..."* (Rom. 11:22). The prophet Zephaniah spoke concerning the severity and goodness of God. Of Severity he said *"I will utterly consume all things from off the land saith the Lord"* (1:2). Of the Lord's goodness he stated, *"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing"* (3:17).

During the time of Zephaniah's prophecy the people of Jerusalem had come to think that God would not intervene in the affairs of men either to reward or to punish. *"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil"* (1:12).

The character of the message with which Zephaniah was divinely entrusted was: 1. Very dark. It was one of judgment and the responsibility of announcing the terrors of the Lord; 2. Very comprehensive. The prophecies of judgment were not limited to Judah but were also diverted toward the Gentile nations of Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria; 3. It was also a message of encouragement. While he told of the judgment, he called on them to repent.

At the time of prophecy, Judah was still practicing idolatry. The influence of Amon and Manassah, as they encouraged idolatry, before Josiah, was still living in Judah. Before Josiah was still living in Judah, they were practicing idolatry in its various forms, *"Chemarim"* of whom Zephaniah spoke were idolatrous priests (1:4). The people of Judah were continuing to allow some Baal-worship, along with the worship of Malcham. They were following in the footsteps of the Assyrians in their worship of the sun, moon, and stars (1:5).

The false religion of worshiping the sun, moon and stars is wide spread today. Even in America there are those who believe in astrology, in varying degrees.

., They were attempting the impossible task of divided allegiance (1:5). They were living in a time that was corrupt. Some of them were trying to combine the worship of

Jehovah and that of Baal or Malcham. There are those today who desire to serve God and Mammon.

The story is told of an elderly lady sitting in the assembly with others and there suddenly appeared dressed as the devil, as many have pictured him, but not the true picture, in a red shirt and a long tail and horns with a pitchfork in his hand. Everyone rushed out of the building except this elderly lady. She could not walk very well much less run. She responded to the devil by saying, *"Wait a minute Mr. Devil, don't hurt me. I've been on your side all the time."* Many are trying to get by the same way today. Please note what Jesus said about desiring to serve God and mammon at the same time. *"No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"* (Matt. 6:24).

The Scriptures point out the need to make the choice, because of the impossibility of serving God and a false god or gods at the same time. It boils down to the fact that one serves God or the devil.

And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. (Josh. 24:19-25).

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word (I Kings 18:21).



As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if you will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols (Ezek. 20:39).

There are some today who try to combine their Christian practices with masonry and its rituals. This is also impossible. One cannot be a faithful Christian and a mason. One's allegiance must be to God and His Kingdom.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

There are others today that would not dare worship an image, but by their putting before God, such things as pleasure, riches, popularity, family, etc. have become an idolatrous people. Whatever one puts before God, is his god.

Because of Judah's departure from God, great destruction was to come upon Jerusalem and Judah.

Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests (1:7)

Not only did Zephaniah warn of the coming destruction, but also warned that it was to be not too far in the future. Nothing could now save the nation as a whole. Therefore, Zephaniah now urges individuals to repent.

And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their master's houses with violence and deceit (1:8-9).

Zephaniah prophesies, by way of a very vivid description, of the coming siege and destruction of the city by Babylon. He sees the "*fish gate*" the weakest part, assaulted, and hears a loud cry telling that it has fallen, and that the invaders have gained entrance for the "*sound of wailing*": coming from "*The second: lower part of the city, intimates that the enemy is carrying out the destruction*" (1:10) "*A great crashing from the hills: indicates the*

*destruction of the walls and forts"* (1:10). In verse 11 and 13 he describes the destruction of the merchant people. They shall be cut off. Their silver and their goods would become a booty. They would build houses and would not inhabit them, they would plant vineyards but would not drink of the wine.

*"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles..."* (1:12). Verse 12 points out that prosperity in worldly things had resulted in false security. False security led them to be indifferent toward God and His message. Moral corruption and iniquity followed their indifference. Their moral corruption and iniquity was about to be brought to light by Divine scrutiny. When their iniquities are revealed by God, retribution would follow. Jehovah would search Jerusalem with candles hunting the evil out of every dark place in which they have hidden themselves, allowing none to escape. God would then punish them. Sin cannot go unpunished.

*"The great day of the Lord..."* (1:14-18). *"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly..."* (1:14). The time was rapidly approaching. The prophet refers to the time as a day of wrath and fury. Jehovah's wrath would be poured out upon the land and its inhabitants. God would let loose the armies of Babylon upon them. This would be done for their sin and iniquity. The prophet said it would be a day of trouble and distress, in which man would walk like blind men, because they have sinned against God, and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. It would be a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness without a single ray of hope. Their assailants would have no pity as they came against the fenced cities and high towers (battlements). Their fortified cities would not stand. It would be a day of wasteness and desolation. According to 1:18 their wealth could not save them. *"Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath..."* In the destruction that was to come upon them, silver and gold would not be able to pay protection.

According to chapter 2 verses 4 through 15 the heathen nations around Judah were also to experience the judgment

of God. The prophet had announced the judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah; now he turns his thought toward the heathen nations. It should be clear to all, that God is no respecter of persons, that wrong-doing will be punished no matter who is involved. In verses 13-15 it is declared that judgment is to come upon Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. Nineveh would be made "*a desolation.*" Nineveh was a very arrogant city. "*...I am and there is none beside me...*" (2:15). "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*" (Prov. 16:18). Jonah was successful in his preaching to Nineveh. Jonah was very reluctant to go and was not happy with his success. God's message to Nineveh, through Jonah, was, "*...yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*" (Jon. 3:4). When the people heard this they repented. "*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not*" (Jon. 3:10). Jonah's success can be seen in the result of his preaching. The city was spared about two centuries, when otherwise it would have been destroyed in 40 days. Nineveh was destroyed in about 607 B.C. just a few years after Zephaniah predicted it.

## Exhortation To Repentance

*Zeph. 2:1-3*

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Judah is called upon to repent. God still loved the people and desired that they repent. "*Gather yourselves together, O nation not desired; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you*" (Zeph. 2:1-2). Zephaniah calls for repentance and emphasizes the urgency of it. Before the day of opportunity passes and it is too late.

In the midst of such mass destruction, that was so vividly set forth by Zephaniah, there was hope for the meek persons who repented. "*Seek ye the Lord, all the meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger*" (2:3).

## Zephaniah Describes Jerusalem

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As chapter two ends and chapter three begins Zephaniah has now completed his description of God's judgment upon the heathen nations and turns his attention toward the moral conditions of Jerusalem and Judah.

The indictment set forth in this chapter contained certain things against the people in general.

They were charged with being "*filthy and polluted*" (3:1); unjust and cruel to the weak and poor, "*the oppressing city*" (3:1); disobedient to God, "*she obeyed not the voice*" (3:2); insubordinant, "*...She received not correction.*" God had corrected them, by the chastisements brought on them, but they did not profit by them. She did not trust in God but leaned on human help. When trouble arose she made alliances with heathen nations. She did not draw nigh to God but relied upon false gods. The failure to avail herself of the privilege bestowed upon her to pray to and worship the true God had led to her condition. She had broken the covenant which she had made (3:2).

This indictment contained also certain counts directed against the leaders. The princes were charged with cruelty, devouring, like roaring lions, those they should have been protecting. Instead of protecting they were ready to tear to pieces (3:3). The prophets were "*light and treacherous persons...*" They claimed to be prophets of God but they were frivolous or empty boasters who uttered their own fancies as if they were commissioned by God. They really opposed him whom they professed to represent (3:4) The "*...priests have polluted the sanctuary*" (3:4). They had profaned the temple and the worship. They made no distinction between what was sacred and what was profane. The priests had "*...done violence to the law*" (3:4). They had distorted its meaning. They were not keeping it nor teaching others to keep it.

## Blessing, The Promised Restoration

*Zeph. 3:9-20*

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In this great book we find couched in among the

warnings of judgment the gracious promise of blessings to come. Zephaniah looks beyond the coming destruction to a time when the surviving remnant will have reason to rejoice. *"At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord"* (3:20). In this verse God through Zephaniah promised Judah's return even before she was carried into captivity. In verses 13-17 Zephaniah speaks of the remnant of Israel that she *"shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth..."* He told them to sing, be glad and rejoice because, *"...the Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy..."* God also promised to be in their midst, to save them, to rejoice over them with joy. God said he would undo all that afflicted them, gather her that was driven out, and get them praise and fame in the lands where they had been put to shame. The deserved judgment would really prove to be the greatest blessing, leading them from the worship of dumb idols that could not save them to that of the true and living God. After their return from Babylonian captivity, Judah never again seemed even to be tempted to worship idols. Zephaniah said that the saved remnant would have *"a pure language."* The nations around would not have the influence they once had. The lips which had been polluted with the names of idols and the worship offered to false gods would be purified. This also points to Messianic times.

A number of passages in Zephaniah point beyond the return from Babylonian captivity to the Christian age. Zephaniah looks beyond to the time when the law of Moses would be fulfilled and in its place would be a covenant that would include people of every nation. *"The Lord will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen"* (2:11).

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this

mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24).

## **The Coming Judgment And Blessings At The End Of This Dispensation**

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Under this heading we will discuss the judgment that will be for every member of the human family. We will also discuss the plea that God makes, for mankind to come to repentance. We will point out the promise God has made of great blessings to come to the faithful.

## **God Warns Of The Coming Judgment**

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The day of judgment is coming. There is no truth more clearly taught in the Bible, no warning more emphatic.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

Paul spoke these words before a most distinguished audience, composed of philosophers, in the greatest center of culture, one of the most celebrated centers, Areopagus in Athens. Paul told this intelligent audience, that there is a judgment day coming for every member of the human family.

*Certainty of the Judgment.* It is appointed by God.

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

Death and judgment are absolutely certain. *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Heb. 9:27). The testimony of inspired writers declare the certainty of it.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (II Cor. 5:10).

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Pet. 3:10).

And I say the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life and the dead were judged out of those things where were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

For what will we be judged? Our words. *"But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"* (Matt. 12:36-37). Our deeds. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (II Cor. 5:10). *"Who will render to every man according to his deeds"* (Rom. 2:6). Secret things. *"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel"* (Rom. 2:16).

What are some things that will happen on the judgment day? The greatest gathering ever known to mankind. *"And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats"* (Matt. 25:32). You and I will be there. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (II Cor. 5:10). The people of Sodom and Gomorrah will be

there. *"Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city"* (Matt. 10:15). The people of Nineveh will be there. *"The men of Nineveh shall raise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here"* (Matt. 12:41). The greatest separation of all. *"And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats"* (Matt. 25:32).

The Bible describes the separation as: the chaff from the wheat, goats from sheep and the unrighteous from the righteous. That day will be so sad because husbands will be separated from wives, parents from children and friends from friends. The books shall be opened. *"And I say the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"* (Rev. 20:12). Then the judge shall welcome the righteous to heaven. *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:34). He shall condemn the wicked to everlasting punishment. *"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matt. 25:41).

## God Calls Mankind To Repentance

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God's plea for mankind is that they repent before the judgment day. He does not want anyone to perish but, rather, wants them to repent. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (II Pet. 3:9). If man does not repent the judge will condemn them to eternal punishment. Jesus said, *"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). Paul encourages those who need to repent, to do so. *"And the*



*times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30). Paul states in the next verse why men should repent.

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31)

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Yes, God calls on us to repent. The question is, what will we do about it?

## **God Promised Blessings For Those Who Remain Faithful**

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The judgment will not be terrible for the faithful, because that will be the time when they will receive the blessings of heaven. *"...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10). Those who die in the Lord are blessed. *"...write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them"* (Rev. 14:13). The faithful will inherit the kingdom. *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:34). The righteous will go into life eternal. *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous, into life eternal"* (Matt. 25:46). Paul believed in the blessings promised by God.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth

there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,  
which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at  
that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also  
that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Yes, the blessings will be great, therefore, we should be  
preparing for the judgment day.

## Conclusion

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In light of the facts that, judgment is certain, God calls  
us to repentance and God promised blessings for the  
faithful, shouldn't we strive to be among the faithful. What  
will you do? If you are not a Christian you must: Hear the  
gospel (Rom. 10:17); believe (Mark 16:16); repent (Luke  
13:3); confess (Rom. 10:10); be baptized for the remission  
of sins (Acts 2:38). If you are an unfaithful child of God you  
must: repent (Acts 8:22); confess that you have sinned  
(James 5:16); pray (Acts 8:24). Please do not continue to put  
off your obedience. Paul stated,

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and  
in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold,  
now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of  
salvation (II Cor. 6:2).

# *Zechariah's Visions*

Mac Deaver

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## **I. Visions (Zech. 1:7-6:8)**

1. The vision of the horses (1:7-17).
2. The vision of the horns and smiths (1:18-21).
3. The vision of the measurer (2:1-13).
4. The vision of Joshua the high priest (3:1-10).
5. The vision of the candlestick and the olive trees (4:1-14).
6. The vision of the flying roll (5:1-4).
7. The vision of the ephah (5:5-11)
8. The vision of the chariots (6:1-8)

## **II. Lessons To Be Learned.**

1. God is concerned about his house.
2. God wants his people encouraged to do the work they have been given to do.
3. God wants his people to know that those who plunder them will one day pay for their deeds.
4. God is the protecting wall and the glory of his people.
5. God's people are the apple of his eye.
6. The church is composed of many nations.
7. God's people are a brand plucked out of a fire.
8. Because Jesus walked in God's ways, he had access to the Father, and only in that way can we have access to the Father.
9. God has made it possible for the iniquity to be removed.
10. Evildoers will be punished for their sin.
11. It is not by our might or power, but by the Spirit of God's will is done in the affairs of men.
12. God knows how to purge his people of their sin.

13. No nation or empire is beyond God's ability to destroy.

## Introduction

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After Cyrus made his famous decree, many of the Jews left Babylon and returned home to Palestine. Initial work on the temple began, but with opposition raised against it, the work stopped. God sent Haggai to stir the people up that the work might be continued. Later Zechariah joins the effort in motivating the people and encouraging them in their work.

Part of God's message through Zechariah comes through a series of eight visions. To those visions we now turn our attention.

## Discussion

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One, the vision of horses (1:7-17).

On the twenty fourth day of the eleventh month, Zechariah sees in the night a vision of horses. He sees a man riding a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees. Behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. These are all explained to be those whom Jehovah had sent to walk to and fro through the earth. Those thus formerly employed inform the angel of Jehovah that they have finished their work, and that the earth is at rest.

The angel then asks Jehovah how long it will be until he has mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah against whom his wrath has been extended for the seventy year captivity. Jehovah responds with comfortable words. The angel tells Zechariah to cry out concerning the fact that God is zealous for Jerusalem, and that he is sore displeased with the nations that are at ease. Verse 15 seems to indicate that the people whom God had employed to punish the southern kingdom wanted to inflict more punishment on them than God really wanted. Those nations will now be afflicted themselves. God announces that he is returned to Jerusalem

with mercies and declares that his house shall be built in it. Prosperity and comfort are promised.

Two, the vision of horns and smiths (1:18-21).

Zechariah next sees four horns. He asks the angel that had talked with him what the horns are. The reply is that these are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Then Zechariah is shown four smiths. Zechariah asks, *"What come these to do?"* He is told the smiths are come to terrify the nations, to cast down the horns of the nations which had lifted up their horn against Judah to scatter it.

Third, the vision of the measurer (2:1-13).

Next Zechariah sees a man with a measuring line in his hand. Zechariah asks the man where he is going, and he says he is going to Jerusalem to see what the breadth and the length of it are. The angel that had been talking with Zechariah meets another angel who tells the former angel to run and tell Zechariah that Jerusalem will be inhabited as villages without walls. There will be a multitude of people and cattle in her. Jehovah will be a wall of fire about her and will be the glory in the midst of her.

Those Jews still in Babylon are warned to flee, for the wrath of God is going to fall on those who have victimized his people. This prophecy will serve to show (when fulfilled) that Zechariah had in fact been sent by God (2:9). God's people are to rejoice because of God's return in mercy to his people. In 2:11 we read, *"And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee"*. God will choose Jerusalem, and what he is about to accomplish will appear as though he has just waked out of sleep to see that it is done.

Four, the vision of Joshua the high priest (3:1-10).

Zechariah then sees Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah. And Satan is standing at Joshua's right hand to be his adversary. *"And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"* (3:2).

Joshua was standing before the angel and was wearing filthy garments. The angel then told some others before him to take the filthy garments off of Joshua. Then the angel said to Joshua, *"...Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will cloth thee with rich apparel."* Zechariah requests that a clean turban be placed on Joshua's head, and such is done.

The angel then says to Joshua, *"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by"* (3:7). The men that sit before Joshua are said to be a sign. God will bring forth his servant the Branch (Shoot, Sprout). A stone with seven eyes had been placed before Joshua. Jehovah said he would engrave the stone and would remove the iniquity of the land in one day. And that day would be a time of peace and prosperity.

Five, the vision of the candlestick and the olive trees (4:1-14).

The angel came to Zechariah and waked him out of sleep. The angel asked Zechariah what he saw. Zechariah replied that he had seen a golden candlestick with an olive-tree on each side of it. Zechariah asked the significance of what he saw, and he was told, *"...This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts"* (4:6). And Zechariah is informed that Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple, he would indeed finish the work (4:8).

Zechariah then inquires as to the two olive-trees. In fact, he asks twice regarding their significance. He is finally informed that the two olive-trees are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

Six, the vision of the flying roll (5:1-4).

Zechariah lifts up his eyes and sees a flying roll that is twenty cubits in length and ten cubits in breadth. The angel explains to Zechariah, *"...This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole land..."* (5:3). Those that steal and swear by Jehovah's name shall be victims of the curse.

Seven, the vision of the ephah (5:5-11).

Zechariah is told by the angel to lift up his eyes and see what is going forth. He sees something and asks what it is. He is told that it is the ephah that goeth forth (a measure). He then sees a round piece of lead, evidently the lid for the measuring vessel. When it is lifted Zechariah sees a woman who in the vision represents Wickedness. The angel casts her down into the midst of the ephah, and the lid is shut. Then Zechariah sees two women with the wind in their wings. They lift up the ephah between earth and heaven. Zechariah then asks the angel where they are taking the ephah. *"And he said unto me, To build her a house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place"* (5:11).

Eight, the vision of the chariots (6:1-8).

Zechariah then sees four chariots coming out from between two mountains of brass. The first chariot has red horses, the second has black horses, the third has white horses, and the fourth has grizzled strong horses (KJV has *"grisled and bay horses"*). Zechariah then asks the angel as to the significance of what he sees. He is told *"...These are the four winds of heaven which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth."*

The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, and the chariot with the white horses goes after them. The chariot with the grizzled horses goes toward the south country. And the strong horses (perhaps red horses) sought to walk to and fro through the earth, and they are given permission to do just that. *"Then cried he to me, and spoke unto me, saying, Behold, they that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country"* (6:8). This, it seems, is a vision depicting the overthrow of Babylon.

Now, having briefly given the visions that Zechariah was privileged to see, let us consider some lessons taught in these scenes.

One, God is concerned about his house (1:16).

In Zechariah's day, God wanted the work on the temple continued and the building completed. And through Zechariah the people are assured that the hands of Zerubbabel will indeed complete what he had earlier begun.

Anytime the Lord's house is in a state of disrepair, he is concerned that the work go forward and the needed repairs made. This truth applies as much to the spiritual house of God (I Tim. 3:15), as to the physical temple in Jerusalem. God is concerned about the church, and he wants the church to rest on the sure foundation of Christ, and to go forward in its work according to truth. And when things occur that damage the house or which split it in two, or which cause it to be weak and frail, God's desire is for the needed repairs to be immediately made. Does any man have the right to simply take care of his own business while the house of God stands in need of attention (Hag. 1:4)?

Two, God wants his people encouraged to do the work they have been given to do (1:13). It is true that there are many discouragements along life's way. The work on the temple had earlier been begun, and the workers stopped in the midst of great opposition. It is easy to grow discouraged. But God wants his people to rise to the occasion. He wants them to be motivated and encouraged to do what they should do. The words supplied through men like Haggai and Zechariah would serve such a purpose. And the word of God in its completed form serves as such an encouragement to the church today. Regardless of the difficulties we are called upon to endure and the crises through which we may be called upon to pass, the word of God stands as our constant source of strength and vitality, and it ever encourages us to go forward with the work we have been given.

Three, God wants His people to know that those who plunder them will one day give account for what they have done; as they have sown, so will they reap (1:15, 21; 2:9). The justice of God will be complete. And those who have delighted in hurting God's people will find themselves eventually the victims of God's great wrath. David would call upon God to punish his enemies (Psm. 140:9-11; Psm. 35:1-6). And Paul knew that justice would come to the enemies of the church: *"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will render to him according to his works"* (II Tim. 4:14).

And all those who have torn asunder the body of



Christ will one day pay for that crime by them committed. All of those who rejoice in her calamity, who hold her up to ridicule and contempt will one day pay. Those who scorn the truth that she alone upholds in the world will one day receive their just recompense.

Four, God is the protecting wall and the glory of His people (2:5). God through Zechariah assured the people that God was returning in favor and blessing to Jerusalem. He Himself would form the protecting wall and Her glory. Just so today, God guards the church through the faith of His people and through the peace that passeth all understanding (I Pet. 1:5; Phil. 4:7). When God's people neglect the truth and drift away from it, they change their glory for that which doth not profit (Jer. 2:11).

Five, God's people are the apple of His eye (2:8). It is true that God has a special regard for His people, and it is true that there is a sense in which God's people are to have a special regard for their own (Gal. 6:10). God is no respecter of persons in the sense that God wants all men to be saved (II Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:4), but it is not true that God equally delights in all men (Prov. 15:9). Though God had wanted Judah punished for her transgression, the Babylonians did not realize the special regard that God had for Judah; she did not realize that she was afflicting *"the apple of His eye."*

Six, the church is composed of many nations (2:11).

And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah  
in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell  
in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that  
Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

On the day the church was established, there were Jews present on Pentecost from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5). Later Gentiles as well as Jews from various locations entered the kingdom (cf. Acts 10; Acts 11:19-21; etc.). In Christ men regardless of nationality become one (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-19).

Seven, God's people are a brand plucked out of the fire (3:2).

And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O  
Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem  
rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the  
fire?

Though the southern kingdom had been carried off for her sin into Babylonian captivity, she was able to return by the grace of God. There is great significance in this, for several prophecies made could only be fulfilled in Palestine. Perhaps the Devil thought he was getting the advantage when the Jews were removed from the promised land, but God saw to it that that was simply not the end of the story. And so like a brand plucked out of the fire, Judah was enabled to return.

And it is also true, that if the world is lost and headed for a Devil's hell, those who obey the gospel and become the Christians are "*plucked out of the fire.*" In Jude 22-23 we read, "*And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*"

Eight, because Jesus walked in God's ways, He had access to the Father, and only in that way can we have access to the Father (3:7). It seems that Joshua, the high priest, in the vision given in chapter 3 is a type of Christ. And Joshua is told,

...if thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by (3:7).

Jesus was faithful (Heb. 3:2); He walked in the ways of God doing His will. Joshua was told that he would thus be allowed to judge God's house. And Jesus as God's son would ultimately become the judge of all men (John 12:48; Acts 17:20-21).

Nine, God has made it possible for the iniquity to be removed (3:9). God promised to bring forth His servant the Branch, and He would remove the iniquity of that land in one day. It was through the cross of Christ that the iniquity was removed (Isa. 53:4-6). "...*Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" If any man goes to heaven, it will be because Jesus Christ's blood has covered his sin (Heb. 2:9; Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28).

Ten, evildoers will be punished for their sin (5:1-4). In the vision of the flying roll we see how that the curse of God will fall on those who lie and steal. Those who have no

regard for truth and right will be punished for their sin. Those who have pleasure in unrighteousness will be recipients of the punishment of God (II Thess. 2:11-12).

Eleven, it is not by our might or power, but by the Spirit of God that God's will is done in the affairs of men (4:6). God is in complete control (cf. Dan. 4:25; Isa. 6:1). God would see to it that the temple was completed; He would see to it that in time the church would be established. God will see to it that every promise by Him made will be kept. And we are what we are (that is good) by His grace (I Cor. 15:10), and we are able to accomplish what He desires that we do according to the strength He provides (Phil. 4:13).

Twelve, God knows how to purge His people of their sin. The practice of sin and God's people make incongruent pieces of a puzzle. The people back from Babylonian captivity weren't all living good moral lives. Some of them needed to be reformed (Neh. 13:23ff). Through the prophets the reformatory efforts went on. In the vision of the ephah, we see wickedness being removed from the area and located over in Shinar. Wickedness will reside in Shinar -- not in Jerusalem. The New Testament also shows the inappropriateness of Christians practicing sin. The New Testament teaches us to practice self-control (Rom. 12:1-2; I Cor. 9:27) and to discipline members of the church who are living in such a way as to bring reproach upon her (I Cor. 5:1-8).

Thirteen, no nation or empire is beyond God's ability to destroy (6:1-8). In the vision of the chariots, it seems that the overthrow of Babylon (the north country) is seen. *"...Behold, they that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country"* (6:8). The destruction would be complete. God would be satisfied.

It matters not whether it is the Babylonian Empire, the Roman Empire, or any particular nation. God gives the kingdoms to whom He will (Dan. 4:25). And that includes our own nation as well.

May God help us to learn the lessons of Zechariah's visions and apply them to our lives.

# *Daniel's Prophecy Of The Kingdom*

*(Daniel 2:36-45)*

**Guy F. Hester**

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This prophecy of Daniel concerning the kingdom of Christ has been a source of controversy for many years. Those who hold to the doctrine of premillennialism rely heavily upon certain portions of the book of Daniel to support their theory. The doctrine of premillennialism has done, and continues to do, much damage to the body of Christ.

Briefly stated, premillennialists teach that Christ will return to the earth and set up a kingdom and sit on David's literal throne in the city of Jerusalem, and that he will gather all the Jews to Palestine and re-create the old Jewish Empire, and reign for a literal one thousand years upon the earth. This doctrine is absolutely false!

The Scriptures do not teach that Christ will return to this earth. The Scriptures do teach that Christ will come. Jesus said, *"I will come again"* (John 14:3). But Paul tells us that those who are *"in Christ"* at his coming will *"rise to meet him in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thess. 4:17). The doctrine of premillennialism would have the Lord coming again at least twice, first for his saints and second with his saints. Between the coming for his saints and his coming with his saints, they teach that there will be a seven year period of tribulation during which the living will be *"raptured"* away with Christ. Then at the end of the tribulation Christ will come with the raptured saints, raise the righteous dead, and set up his earthly millennial kingdom during which time Satan will be bound and the earth will

enjoy universal peace. Then at the end of the millennial Christ will raise the wicked dead and the eternal state will begin. But the Bible nowhere refers to a seven year tribulation period, a secret coming, a rapture (this word or the idea that it teaches is not even in the Bible), or two resurrections each separated by a thousand years. Instead, it teaches that when Christ comes he will be seen by all (Rev. 1:7), that he will raise all the dead (John 5:28,29), and that he will deliver up the kingdom of God, the Father, not establish the kingdom (I Cor. 15:24-26).

If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that the kingdom has already been established.

Let us now get back to our text. In Daniel 2:44 we read, *"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and shall stand forever."* There were four world kingdoms according to Daniel. These were the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian or Macedonian, and the Roman.

Daniel said, *"In the days of these kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom."* Now the question is, did God do what Daniel said he would do? In Daniel the seventh chapter he said, *"I saw...one like the Son of man come to the Ancient of days."* The *"Son of man"* refers to the Son of God, and the *"Ancient of days"* refers to God Almighty. *"I saw...the Son of man (Son of God) ...come to the Ancient of days (God Almighty) and there was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall never pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed"* (Dan. 7:13,14). He was talking about the same kingdom that he mentioned in Daniel 2:44. Now when is the Son of Man going to come to the Ancient of days to receive this kingdom? How can we know when he does that? Listen to Daniel in the first part of verse thirteen, *"I saw in the night visions and behold, one like the Son of Man, come with the clouds of heaven...to the Ancient of days."* Now if we can find where the Son of God came to the Ancient of days in

the clouds of heaven we can establish the fact that the kingdom of Christ is about to come into being, because the Lord would then be gone to receive it. Now we turn to the first chapter of Acts and take note of the fact that Jesus has ascended "*in the clouds*" of heaven which the prophet Daniel said that he would do, and his ascension into heaven was that he might receive the kingdom. So we don't have to guess about that. Now let us go on. In the Old Testament there are repeated references to the coming of the house of God, the church, the kingdom. Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-5 teach of the coming of the kingdom, of the house of God. Joel 2:28-32 points out the things that are going to take place in the last days and how that deliverance will be in the city of Jerusalem. Zechariah 1:16, pinpoints the beginning of the kingdom in the city of Jerusalem. Therefore, we know without a doubt that it is going to come in the days of the Roman kings. It is going to begin in the city of Jerusalem and it will be "*in the last days.*" Now we come to the New Testament and we hear John saying, "*The kingdom is at hand*" (Matt. 3:2) We hear Jesus say, "*I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom*" (Matt. 16:18,19). Jesus said, "*Verily, I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power*" (Mark 9:1).

We turn now to the second chapter of Acts and note that it is in the days of the Roman kings when this takes place. The apostles are in the city of Jerusalem just as the prophet said they would be. The power comes with the Spirit. The Spirit came and took his abode in the apostles. They began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. There is the time and the place and Peter said, "*This is that which is spoken by the prophet Joel...*" that would "*come to pass in the last days*" (Acts 2:16,17). The time and place are correct, the time that God has chosen has now come. The power comes and the kingdom comes into being! Before Pentecost the prophets pointed to Pentecost as the beginning of the kingdom. Every passage thereafter, that speaks in any sense of its establishment,

points back to Pentecost as the beginning. Therefore, the Bible itself pinpoints the establishment of the kingdom of God, in the city of Jerusalem, on the first Pentecost, after the ascension of Jesus.

Now just a few passages to show that this is true. In Colossians 1:13 Paul said, *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."* Notice the word *"into."* How can you get into something that doesn't exist? When you came to this service you came into this auditorium. How could you come into this auditorium if it were not here? It would be an impossibility. How could people, then, in the days of the apostle Paul be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son if that kingdom was not in existence? Again Hebrews 12:28 says, *"Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved"* We have already received it! *"Made us to be a kingdom...we receiving a kingdom...translated into the kingdom."* Now listen to brother John in Revelation 1:9, *"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."* What did you say John? I said, *"I...am your brother."* But in what are we brethren, John? *"I...am your brother...in the kingdom of Christ."* Now, how could John be a brother in the kingdom of Christ if it was not even in existence in John's day? In I Corinthians 15:24,25 we are plainly told that Christ must reign. I want you to especially notice that word *"must."* Christ *"must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."* Then what is going to happen? He will then *"deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father."* How can he then deliver up the kingdom if he doesn't then possess the kingdom?

In Acts 2:30 we read, *"Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne."* Now what was the purpose of his being raised up? Peter says, To sit on David's throne! Now if Christ is not on David's throne, and the premillennialist say that he is not, God raised him up but did not do what he said he would do. But the premillennialist

argue that he did not say that he would immediately sit on David's throne. They claim that this he will eventually do but the time is not yet. That argument will not hold up in light of the context. Let us read Acts 2:29-36, *"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."* Now if that doesn't strike the death blow to premillennialism I do not know of a passage in the Bible that will. *"God...made him...both Lord and Christ."* Therefore Christ is reigning right now as King of kings and Lord of lords at the right hand of God on the throne of his father David. We are also told that Christ is at God's right hand. This fact is also stated by the Hebrew writer: *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* This passage teaches us that God exalted Christ to be at his right hand. Therefore, Jesus is now reigning, now ruling, and now governing, the kingdom of God.

It is said by the millennialists that there were three major promises made to ancient Israel, and that they have not all been faithful. These three promises are: the land promise, the restoration promise, and the seed promise. They contend that God did not fulfill the land promise and therefore there must be a restitution or a restoration of ancient Israel in order



that the land promise might be fulfilled. In Genesis 15:18, God told Abraham what the extent of the possessions of Israel would be. In Deuteronomy 1:7-8, Moses told the people to possess it. In Joshua 21:43 Joshua says that they did possess it. Listen carefully to what he said, *"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers and they possessed it, and dwelt therein."* Joshua, how much land did God give unto Israel? *"...and the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; and the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass"* (Josh. 21:43-45). What about the land promise? When Joshua gave his final address to Israel he said that God fulfilled all that he said he would do for Israel. He said, *"And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof"* (Josh. 23:14). We learn from II Samuel 8:3 and I Kings 4:21 that David recovered the land when it was lost and Solomon reigned over it.

When the Israelites entered into the promised land, they were under compulsion to set up six cities refuge (Num. 35:6-28). This was done as the people were given their inheritance. The fact that the land was distributed (Josh. 19:49), the people received their inheritance (Josh. 19:51), and the six cities of refuge were set up and appointed (Josh. 20:7-9), is further proof that the land promise was fulfilled. That takes care of the land promise.

Moses said in the book of Deuteronomy, that if the people should do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord that they would utterly perish from off the land. God drove the people out of the land and yet God promised these people that he would restore them to the land from which they had been driven out. Often the restoration promise that concerned ancient Israel is twisted to mean that God will restore the

ancient kingdom of Israel. The restoration promise does not mean that. The restoration promise that God made was to restore the people from Babylonian captivity. The Jews were captives in Babylon for seventy years. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews were restored to their land (Jer. 25:8-12; Ezra 1:1-4; II Chron. 36:20-21). It is seen from these passages that the restoration took place during the time of Cyrus, king of Persia. In Hosea 13:10 God said, *"I will be their king."* Thus, the people were restored to their land with God as their king. The restoration promise had been fulfilled.

There is no argument about the seed promise in particular because most everyone recognizes that the seed was Christ. We will not spend any time on that particular point but to emphasize it by saying that God said unto Abraham, *"In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 12:3). Christ came through the seed of Abraham, therefore he is a blessing to all mankind (Gal. 3:8, 14, 28, 29). Jews and ~~Gentiles~~ Gentiles can obey God and come into the kingdom of His dear Son (Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:13).

But someone says, *"Even if what you have said is so, there is still Revelation 20 which talks about Satan being bound for a thousand years and saints reigning with Christ for a thousand years."*

Now let me suggest that it is not necessary to understand everything that Revelation 20 means to know what it does not mean. I heard brother Alan Highers use the following illustration a few years ago at the Freed-Hardeman lectures. Brother Highers said, *"The late brother G. C. Brewer was once in a discussion with a premillennialist and was asked about the meaning of Revelation 20. Brother Brewer frankly admitted that he did not know what it meant. His opponent asked him, 'Then how do you know that it does not teach premillennialism?' Brother Brewer glanced across the street and said to the man, 'There goes your wife.' The man replied, 'That is not my wife.' Brother Brewer asked, 'Who's wife is she?' The man said, 'I don't know.' Brother Brewer then replied, 'Then how do you know she is not your wife?'"* Similarly, by knowing what

the Bible does teach with reference to the reign of Christ and his kingdom, we can know that Revelation 20 does not teach what premillennialists say that it teaches. The Bible does not contradict itself. It does not teach in a multiplicity of plain passages that Christ is now reigning over his kingdom and in one highly figurative passage that Christ's reign and kingdom are yet in the future!

If the one thousand years of Revelation 20 are literal then by all means *"the key"* is literal, the *"dragon"* is literal (so the devil is literally a dragon, a serpent), the devil is literally *"bound"* with a literal *"chain"* for a literal *"thousand years."* The point we wish to emphasize is that this passage cannot be taken literally. Therefore, the thousand years mentioned in this passage is not a literal thousand years, nor does this passage teach a literal earthly reign of Christ.

Let us take note of some things that are absolutely essential to the premillennial theory that are not even mentioned in Revelation 20: (1) The second coming of the Lord, (2) the establishment of a kingdom, (3) the Jews being gathered to Palestine, (4) a bodily resurrection, (5) David's throne, (6) an earthly reign. It is significant that the necessary elements of premillennialism are not found in this passage that they could lean on so heavily and without which they could not concoct their theory.

When followed to its logical conclusion, premillennialism denies the authority of Christ. Jesus said, *"All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth."* Premillennialism says that is not so. Premillennialism denies the wisdom of God. Premillennialist teachers contend that God sent his Son to establish his kingdom. They say that Christ came and the Jews rejected him and he, because of their rejection, could not establish his kingdom, therefore he set up the church. That simply means that God in his wisdom could not accomplish what he sent his Son to accomplish and because the Jews did not respond to the invitation of the Son of God, it means that God is going to have to do it all over again. This theory says that the church is just here as an accident to temporarily take the place of the kingdom that God intended for Christ to establish when he sent him into the world the first time. If that is so, why

should we expect God to be able to do the second time what he could not do the first time? If it is necessary for Christ to come back to accomplish what he was sent to accomplish in the first place, what assurance do we have that he is going to be able to accomplish it the second time? We have no assurance, therefore we suggest that premillennialism denies the authority of Christ and the wisdom and power of God.

Finally, if premillennialism is true, which it is not, but if it were true, then the word of God is an imposition upon the minds of mankind. In Ephesians 3:8 we read, *"Unto me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."* If premillennialism were true there wouldn't be any need for that, for they would have us believe that at the reinstituting of the old Jewish Empire, world-wide conversion will take place. So there would be no need of preaching *"the unsearchable riches of Christ"* today.

Paul said, *"To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph. 3:10-11). We cannot under any circumstances conceive of God having been defeated in his great purpose!

Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 2 had its fulfillment on Pentecost in Acts 2. The church is according to the eternal purpose of God. The church and the kingdom are one and the same institution. When Christ comes again he will deliver the kingdom back to the Father. At his coming all the dead will be raised, both good and evil, and all will stand in judgment and give an account unto God.

# *The Conflict Between Good And Evil, And What The Christian Should Expect*

Jimmy Thompson

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## **I. The Origin of the Book**

- A. The place
- B. The causes
- C. Its purpose

## **II. The Terrible Prophecies**

- A. The effect on John
- B. The proof of the book
- C. The persecutions of the faithful

## **III. The Book Today**

- A. What it does not teach
- B. What it does teach
  - 1. Blessings to study it
  - 2. The greatness of God
  - 3. The imperative action of humanity
  - 4. The blessings of death in Christ
  - 5. The promises of God
  - 6. The prohibition to change God's Word
  - 7. The reality of the judgment
  - 8. There is a place called hell
  - 9. There is a place called heaven
  - 10. The Lord's sure return

## **IV. The Expectations That Are Available**

- A. For the world
- B. For the Christian
- C. For me

As John stood on the island of Patmos, he was the lone survivor of a band of fourteen men. Men that had been selected by Jesus to be His apostles. The fears of the rapid and continuous growth shown by the Christians in numbers and influence had caused civil and religious leaders to bring about persecutions which had required the twelve faithful apostles whom John had labored with to give up their lives. John stood alone with no human companion of equal station or background to receive consolation and strength from, or to share the burden of banishment which he was forced to bear.

In the course of Biblical studies it becomes evident that this last book of the New Testament was written while John was under the sentence of banishment from the imperial seat of Rome on the island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor. The time for the writing of the book must of necessity coincide with the time of the sentence, which places it about the year 96 A.D. The prophecies and visions of the book are therefore to be understood in a time frame that goes forward in time from that date, for in Revelation 1:1 we read,

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.

Thus showing us, that we will read an unfolding of events starting close to that time, and going forward.

After letters were written to the seven churches of Asia, John was witness to a series of visions, symbolic in nature, of history to us, but of the future to him. The purpose of the book is to be found in the message of these visions. The awful events to face the people of the earth, and more especially the members of the church, were horrible in nature, and seemingly insurmountable to the human mind. When faced with the reality of these situations there would have to be something for the followers of Christ to hold to, that was stronger than the events that would accost their senses. That purpose is fulfilled in the book of Revelation. It is the assurance of God to the Christian that the righteous shall not be cast down, but the goodness of God, His

promises for us, and His authority shall be the ultimate and total victor.

John saw islands moved and mountains fall. He saw seas turned red with the blood of men, and the rivers filled with the dead. He saw stars fall from the heavens, and he saw the souls of those who were to die asking God when He would take vengeance for their deaths. How awful things must have appeared to the apostle who is noted as the apostle of love. A man who wrote to the church as his *"little children."* A man who was charged with the keeping of the mother of Jesus by the Savior as He hung upon the cross at Calvary. To a man of compassion these scenes that he witnessed had to be horrifying.

As with any prophetic writing, the validity and the truthfulness of its contents can only be proven by the comparisons with the subsequent actual happenings. To be assured of the prophecy of the ultimate victory of good over evil, and the future abode for eternity with God, we need to see if the reality of history shows the fulfillment of the prophecies of this book.

Have mountains and islands moved in the history of man? When we realize that the symbol of islands and mountains are representative of nations and leaders we see that there have been circumstances exactly in line with the prophecies of revelation where leaders and nations have been changed to such an extent that it is easily stated that they have moved, in the political spectrum, the geographical spectrum, and in the reality of even being in existence. Many nations that we have seen in the pages of the New Testament do not exist any longer, and many leaders have fallen by non natural means, through revolt or treachery. As these events occurred, there was a natural consequence for the members of the church, and during that chaos the promise of God was the only stability they could find.

The stars of heaven fell to the earth in the eyes of John, and in history we see the leaders of the church falling from the spiritual heights of faithfulness to the depths of the earthly domain ruled by Satan. Ephesians 6:12 states,

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the

rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Perhaps the hardest adversity for a Christian to face is to be persecuted for following the teachings of the Bible. During the political changes that are prophesied in the revelation and during the apostasy of church leaders prophesied in the revelation, persecution of the faithful was a constant and ever present way of life.

Starting with the persecutions during the Roman changes of government to the present day, we see the following acts perpetrated against the gospels adherents. They were wrapped in the skins of animals and fed to the beasts in the coliseum of Rome. The Caesars used their bodies wrapped in lambs wool and dipped in oil to light their palace gardens at night as they hung burning from posts along the paths. Pagans forced the young women to serve in the temples of the false gods, and slaughtered the preachers and elders of the church. Members of the church were drawn and quartered, they were stoned, drowned, burned, stabbed, beheaded, crucified, boiled in oil, peeled alive, buried to the chin and left to die of starvation, hung from trees by one arm or leg and pierced by darts, hands cut off, legs cut off, eyes plucked out, hair pulled out, publicly disgraced and degraded, forced to watch family members tortured and murdered, and in some cases to do the act themselves if they refused to recant their belief in the Son of God and His church. At first, these actions were taken by governments opposed to the churches teachings against the state gods, and later they were taken by the followers of the doctrines of man who called themselves Christian, but were as John called them in I John 2:18-19 "*Antichrist*" and those who "*went out from us.*"

Within the past twenty years there have been instances of governments forbidding the assembly of the church, taking over the property of the church, and in Spain of removing with a chisel the name Church of Christ from over the building's door. In Ireland, a person can easily be killed if he is not Catholic, and in the Iron Curtain countries the church must assemble in secret. The message of Revelation must be held dear and applicable today.



As brethren today in this country try to restructure the church and bind it to an illegitimate relationship with the whoredom of denominationalism, we need to turn to the pages of the book to keep from losing the hope, that someday will be replaced with fact, and from diminishing the faith, that will soon become sight. What does the book of Revelation tell us for today?

It does not teach of a rapture of the church, or of a seven year period of tribulation, or of a thousand year physical reign of Jesus on the throne of David, or of a revitalized and active Jewish social/religious state, or of a physical warfare between Russia and Israel, or of any one of thousands of other doctrines that mankind has tried to implant in the sacred page. God has not ordained these things to be, and they are not scriptural teachings for the church to adhere to, or propagate.

It does teach the following points:

*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

We have long shunned the teaching and study of the book of Revelation for fear of not understanding it, and that it does not apply to us. This is wrong, and we must look to the book for the hope in these trying times. There is no thought as ridiculous as that of God giving us a book that we can not understand, or can not derive spiritual strength and knowledge from. We must read and hear, or study and be taught, if we want to receive this blessing that God has promised.

*I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Rev. 1:8).*

It reaffirms the teaching of the apostle in John 1:1 *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* Jesus has been from before time was, and shall be here after time ceases. It verifies the teaching of John 14:1-3,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many

mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there you may be also.

Jesus the alpha and omega. We see the flux and life and the temporariness of all that man has brought forth, and only in the only begotten son of God is there a lasting and permanent place for mankind. We see that the promise given in Matthew 28:20 is still in force where Jesus said, "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" We are not alone as evil tries to overcome good. We can lay aside the desire of our heart or even our life, and know that Jesus is there and will care for us. To lose the body and its life is not so terrible when we realize that he is to be, and that we can retain the spirit and its life safe in the body of Christ, both here in this vail of tears and also throughout eternity.

*I will show thee things which must be hereafter.*  
(Rev. 4:1b).

The things that were shown to John were fixed. They must happen. It is imperative, and there is nothing which can stop the predetermined course that God has set. That course shows that the prince of this earth and his servants will be destroyed. Revelation 21:8, "*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*" It also shows that the righteous shall have an eternal abode with God. Revelation 21:7, "*He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*"

*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*  
(Rev. 14:13).

There is blessing in ending the journey of this life, no matter under what circumstances, if we are in the body of Christ. It is in the body of Christ that we find the grace of God (II Tim. 1:9) that we are added to the body of Christ when we

are baptized (Gal. 3:27), and that the church, the body, will be presented to God by Jesus, at the end of time. *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when he shall have put down all rule, and authority and power"* (I Cor. 15:24). The assurance of a place with God is given nowhere outside of the body of Christ the church.

*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).*

The promise of God that there shall be peace and happiness beyond our comprehensive abilities. In all the political systems of mankind and all his philosophies he attempts to find, peace of mind, peace of spirit, freedom from distress, and happiness to its fullest. But the philosophies of men end at the grave. They have no power beyond that which is. Yet the New Testament teaches that there is a place prepared for the followers of godly wisdom, which is beyond the power of the grave, which does not die with the body, and which guarantees for those who adhere to its teachings those very points which man has always strived for.

*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).*

Man is not free to add to or take from the word of God. If this principle applies to one book of the New Testament, then it must apply to all the others unless it is exempted by God's word. If not, why not? Yet today we see men trying in and out of the church to change what God has to say. God said His son was to be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), yet some would have us believe she was just a young woman. The records of man teach us that many young women are not virgin nor chaste in any way. God's word states that we are

to sing. As it is stated by the apostle Paul guided by the Holy Spirit, it is a command, an imperative to perform an action. Yet today, we have those who would have us to believe it also permissible to play. If this is so, why not also dance? Why not whistle? Why not hire someone else to sing for us? There are those who teach that the eldership is not authoritative today. God's word did not remove it. How can we? There are those who no longer recognize God's boundaries of fellowship. In II John verse 9-11, we are told by holy writ,

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Yet today we hear in the meeting houses of the church across the land a cry to widen our circle of fellowship. A cry to accept these little differences for we can not be sure of having all truth, and that truth is not black and white but many shades of gray. If we do not have all truth, then the Bible is false; for it says in II Timothy 3:17 the gospel was given *"that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* In Matthew 24:35, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."* Then in John 12:48, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* To know that these warnings, promises, and prophecies are delivered in the Bible and to teach in any other way than that which the Bible authorizes is a foolish action beyond description. How can anyone in their right mind, voluntarily desire to partake willingly in the evil deeds of others? Why do we not protect the body of Christ, but instead place friendship, popularity, and man's knowledge above the Word of God, and desire to always compromise.

The most vile and viciously ugly word that can be uttered by man in regard to the teachings of the Bible or the stand that must be taken by the church, is the word: compromise. We are not authorized to compromise what has

been bound in heaven. Oh why won't the church wake up, and stand for the Savior who died and purchased us with His blood? Why do we as a body, fail to take the stand that God expects? Why do we fear the results of being a faithful servant? If we study the revelation of Christ we have no hope in standing anywhere but where God said to stand.

There will be a universal judgment for all who have ever lived. Romans 14:12, *"So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God."* The teaching is plain and simple, someday you and I will stand before God almighty and answer for the things we have done in this body. Every thought, action, or failure to act, for which there is condemnation taught in the Scripture, and for which we have not sought forgiveness, will be brought before that supreme judge, and an answer will of needs be given.

*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works (Rev. 20:12-13).*

The great men of this earth shall be at that fatal day to declare to the Creator their actions. The forgotten beggars from skidrow will be there to answer for the life they have lived. You and I will be there to face the lamb who was slain for the sins of the world, and we will have to answer for what we are in this life.

*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).*

There is a place called hell. Matthew 25:46, *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."* Anyone who has wronged the teachings of God will be punished for their sin. In this world we think of punishment as a passing thing, which can be endured because of the limited extent and the end that we can see. Yet, we must realize that the punishment that is here spoken of is a punishment for which there will be no end. The

concept of eternity is difficult to grasp, but to try to understand eternity is to further understand the seriousness of being in error. A hundred years could not even be measured in the standard of eternity. A thousand years would not even be the blink of an eye. And yet the punishment we will endure if we fail to stand by the standard of God, is to be an eternal one. Never ending, always continuing, and saddest -- no hope.

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Rev. 21:1-3).*

There is a place called heaven. In Revelation 21 we find a vivid description of that place prepared for the faithful. There is no imagination that can find the beauty that is there told of, or the peace, or the joy, or the glory. But it should be the goal of every person to reach that beautiful shore, and to spend eternity at the foot of the throne of God. All the trials of life gone, all the sadness, and all the frustration. Peace, perfect peace.

*Behold I come quickly: Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:7).*

Jesus ascended into the heavens as His apostles watched, and they were told that He would return in a like manner (Acts 1:11). When He returns He will take vengeance on those who have not obeyed the gospel (II Thess. 1:8), and that position should worry us. Not for ourselves alone, but also for the lost of this world. We should labor all the more from the knowledge that these things are fixed, and must happen.

What about the conflict between good and evil, and what the Christian should expect? The conflict started in the garden of Eden when man was convinced that there was a possibility that he might become like God, and the conflict

will go on as long as man refuses to subjugate himself to the one true God, and serve Him. Evil will become more obvious and vicious as time goes on, and there is little within our power to change it. Persons will be again as they were before the flood, when the very thoughts of their hearts will be evil continuously. As long as there is one person who will try to do good, the battle will rage, for Satan will not be satisfied until he has all under his control. The Christian can expect to be faced from day to day with adversity taking one form or another, both from the world and from those who would call themselves brother. But the Christian can expect more than the worldly can expect. The prospect of the worldly is the spectre of the open grave. All hope ends when they cease to live, and all hell starts when they meet their God whom they have not recognized while alive. A sad and pitiful thought, and many of the souls who will spend eternity in that hell can justifiably ask of their neighbor why they were never told of the gospel and its power.

We in the church who decide to be faithful to the Lord no matter the cost, have so much to look forward to, we can not catalogue the wonders we will share. A home with God, in the company of angels, and the departed great men of the faith. A place of perfect happiness and joy where there is no night, and only good to occupy the never ending day.

What a choice we have to make this day, all as taught and assured in the prophecy of the book of Revelation. Each of us seeing ourself standing before God, just as John saw us so many years ago. Knowing that we are not alone now, and have the strength of the son of God to fall back upon if we obey His word. Knowing that there is His promise to return and take us to that better place on high. With all this knowledge, can we say as Paul said, I am ready to be offered, I have run my course, I have finished my race. Are we ready to face our God on judgment day? If not, why not?

# False Teachers Among Us

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

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That those who are trying to be faithful these days are undergoing "*fiery trials*" of their faith should be self-evident. In fact, almost everywhere I go I hear the brethren almost in chorus lamenting, "*How can it be!*" On the other hand, why should we think this strange? Has it not always been so?

Consider, for instance, what Peter wrote, in I Peter 4:12-19:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

I am sure that everyone here recalls Jesus' saying that it is enough for the "*disciple to be as his Lord.*" I was studying the book of Matthew, for instance, and I was astonished how it was that false teachers beset our Lord



practically on every hand. For example, there were those Pharisees accusing Jesus of eating with publicans and sinners, as if somehow it was wrong to do so. Read with me Matthew 9:9-13:

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a phsician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

In the very next chapter, Matthew 10:16-25, Jesus further said,

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles....The disciple is not above his master, and the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

The Pharisees must have just been standing around watching Jesus to try to trip him up doctrinally, for, in Matthew 12:1-8, we read:

At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were ahungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was ahungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God

and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

But those Pharisees just would not give up. Going on down in that same chapter, in verses 9 through 14, we have these words:

And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

Farther on down in that same chapter, Matthew 12:22-30, those same false teachers charged Jesus with casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Read:

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by

Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Three chapters later we find the scribes and the Pharisees accusing Jesus of transgressing the tradition of the elders. In Matthew 15:1-9, we read,

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

When the disciples reported back that the Pharisees were offended, instead of compromising with them or holding his peace, Jesus said, *"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."* So it was that Jesus himself warned his own immediate disciples of the doctrine of the false teachers of his day.

Not only did Jesus suffer from such false teachers as we have described foregoing, but he warned his disciples of such, as we have seen in Matthew 10:24-25, that *"If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much*

*more shall they call them of his household?"* The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders of "*grievous wolves*" coming in not sparing the flock, also of men arising speaking "*perverse things*" to lead away the disciples after themselves. Moreover, he warned the church at Thessalonica of deceivers (II Thess. 2:2-12).

That false teachers did arise, in the days of the apostles, is evident from large numbers of passages. For instance, in Acts 6:9, we read that certain of the synagogue of the Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians and Cilicia disputed with Stephen, even suborning men who said, "*We have heard him (Stephen) speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.*" They set up false witnesses against him, who said, "*This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.*" And when Stephen resisted their words with a truly magnificent sermon (read Acts 7), these opposers made him the first Christian martyr by stoning him to death. Saul of Tarsus was in that mob, and was so incensed against the truth that he sought letters from the authorities authorizing him to go to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2. See also verses 13 and 14).

We could go on to show numbers of examples of false teachers arising against the truth from without. However, far more damaging were those false teachers who arose from within. One of the first instances of these is found in Acts 11:1-18, concerning those Christians at Jerusalem, described in this passage as "*they that were of the circumcision.*" In this passage, after word had been received in Judea that "*the Gentiles had also received the word of God,*" the Scriptures show that "*when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.*" Although this was a false contention, evidently these men were at least sincere, for after hearing Peter's defense, from verse 4 through 17, verse 18 tells us,

*"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."*

This false teaching of *"the circumcision"* was not entirely laid to rest, however, for, in Acts 15, we further read,

And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Verses 3 and 4 tell of their journey and reception at Jerusalem. Verse 5, says, *"But there arose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."* The next several verses describe the discussions that followed, resulting in it pleasing the apostles and elders, with the whole church, *"to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: and they wrote letters by them after this manner:*

The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than those necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if

ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well, Fare ye well.

Well, when Paul and Barnabas, together with those chosen men, returned to Antioch, gathered the multitude together and read this epistle unto them, it clearly settled the matter, for, verse 31 shows, *"they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them..."*

Later on, we read how Paul took Silas and later Timothy with him on his second missionary journey. Not for any false doctrine, but *"because of the Jews which were in those quarters,"* Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3). *"And as they went through the cities, they delivered the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily"* (Verses 4 and 5).

One should think that, of all people, the apostle Peter would have been the last to go along with any false doctrine, especially concerning circumcision. Was he not the one who had gone to the household of Cornelius, back in Acts 10, and had witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon that occasion? Was he not present at the Jerusalem council, in Acts 15, having a part in writing the decree that Paul, Barnabas and others took back to Antioch? And yet, in Galatians 2, we see Paul rebuking Peter at Antioch for behaving contrary to his own teaching. Beginning with verse 11, we read,

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I say that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

However, the doctrine of circumcision was not the only false teaching among the brethren in the early history of the church. Almost the entire book of Galatians is devoted to refuting the idea that Christians are bound by the Old Testament law. Particularly, in Galatians 1:6-9, Paul said,

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

There must have been many such false teachers in the early church, judging by such warnings against them. Compare the foregoing with what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, in II Corinthians 11:2-4, 13-15, as follows:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him....For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

In this same vein, the apostle John, in I John 4:1, said, *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* And Paul said again, in I Thessalonians 5:21, *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."*

Note the many warnings that Paul gave to his son in the gospel, Timothy. For instance, in I Timothy 1:3-7, he

practically starts out the book by saying,

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith, so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

Farther down, in that same chapter, in verses 10 and 11, he warned against anything and everything which is *"contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."* Then, on down to the end of the chapter, he said,

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme.

In the fourth chapter, verses 1 through 3, he further instructed Timothy, saying,

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Then, again, in Chapter 6:2-5, Paul further enjoined Timothy, saying,

....These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife,



railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Finally, closing out the book, Paul showed how important all this was by saying, in verses 20 and 21,

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

However, it was not just in New Testament times that false teachers got in among the church. Across the centuries since that time, our history is replete with false doctrines of every description that have arisen to plague the churches.

Within the first three hundred years, so much false teaching occurred that the early church went into complete apostasy, resulting in the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church. By the 11th century, A.D., doctrinal departure had gotten so far afield, that a moment arose among the Catholics to make that apostate church more "*orthodox*." All this succeeded in doing was to create three more apostate churches -- the Greek Orthodox, the Russian Orthodox and the Armenian Orthodox. By the 14th and 15th centuries, yet another movement arose in the Roman Catholic Church to bring about reform. Because it was occasioned by protest against Roman Catholic excesses, it became known in history as the Protestant Reformatory Movement. However, once again, instead of the Catholic Church "*reforming*," this movement but succeeded in bringing about numerous so-called "*Protestant*" churches, including the Lutheran, the Church of England (or Episcopal, as it is known in the U. S.), the Dutch Reformed, the Baptist, the Methodist, the Presbyterian and others.

It remained for yet another movement to arise, now known as the Restoration Movement, for an effective effort to be made to go back across the centuries to the New Testament church as it was in the beginning and restore that to the world. Thus it is that from approximately 1793 onward, beginning from James O'Kelly's efforts in the Carolinas, we have had the churches of Christ operative once again among mankind.

The trouble is that mankind never seems to be able to

leave "*well enough*" alone. Therefore, within less than 50 years from the time the Restoration Movement began, false teaching arose to begin plaguing the churches once more. In the first instance, it was over the creation of "*missionary societies*" separate and apart from, as well as in addition to, the local congregations through which the churches were supposed to do their missionary work -- worldwide. However, even while that issue still remained unresolved, yet another one arose over whether it is scriptural to use instrumental music in the worship of the church.

By the decade of the 1880's these two divisive issues had grown to the point that congregations were being divided all over the brotherhood -- those following the societies and instrumental being largely referred to as the Christian Churches, whereas those remaining with the New Testament as their only rule of faith and practice still calling themselves "*the churches of Christ*."

It was not until the national census of 1906 that these two bodies were listed separately by the Bureau of Census. Once we "*got loose*" from those who "*went out from us because they were not of us*" one should have supposed that we'd have learned our lesson. However, if history teaches us anything it seems to teach us that we almost never learn anything from history!

Not long after the churches of Christ separated from the Christian Church a spirit of "*Anti-ism*" seemingly began to arise on all sides. Divisions began to come over such false doctrines as Anti-Women-Teachers, Anti-Bible-Class, Anti-More-Than-One-Container-in-the-Communion and the like. Old brother J. D. Tant used to say that we had become practically "*Anti*" everything but "*ante up*."

By the 1920's, some of our brethren were imbibing the doctrines of "*Pastor*" Charles Taze Russell and "*Judge*" J. F. Rutherford -- hence what was known as "*Premillennialism*" threatened to take over the churches. This threat continued, particularly under the leadership of R. H. Boll, until the Neal-Wallace Discussion, in 1933, in Winchester, Kentucky. From that time forward the Premillennial Movement was no longer viable among the churches of Christ.

However, no sooner had Premillennialism largely been laid to rest than yet another false teaching arose to divide the churches. This time it was "*Anti-Cooperation*." Starting from a specially called "*cooperative*" meeting Lord's Day afternoon, of August 9, 1946, at the East Oakland church of Christ, in Oakland, California, this movement, because the brethren in general refused to be warned, swept away approximately 10% of our members. But no sooner had this run its course than, in the late '50s or early '60s, something we all called "*Liberalism*" began to arise among us. Whereas the Anti-Cooperationists tended to "*bind*" where the Lord had "*loosed*"; the Liberals tended to "*loose*" where the Lord had "*bound*."

Growing out of Liberalism, in the late '60s, the short-lived "*Campus Evangelism*" Movement started leading great numbers of our college-age young people completely away from the truth of the gospel into error. Some of the brethren succeeded in putting a quietus on that movement in the early '70s. However, Chuck Lucas and the Crossroads church in Gainesville, Florida, took over the huge, inter-arsity network that Campus Evangelism had built up, and used it to further their so-called "*Campus Advance*" Movement, which they had started in 1967. Out of this false movement, which used a book called Master Plan of Evangelism, written by a denominational preacher by the name of Robert Coleman, as their guide, another false doctrine known as the "*Crossroads Philosophy*" arose to divide the churches. By now, this movement seems to have been largely taken over by Kip McKean and the Boston church, which, at this time, appears to be coming up with still another false doctrine known as the "*House Church*" Movement.

Whereas neither of these latter two false doctrines appear to have run their course, just within the last five years brother Rubel Shelly has picked up on something that W. Carl Ketcherside (and later Leroy Garrett) came up with more than 30 years ago, i.e., that there are faithful Christians in all churches. And within the last three years such men as Alan Cloyd, Marvin Phillips, Reuel Lemmons and others have spear-headed a movement to lead us back into

fellowship with the so-called Christian Church with neither side giving up anything doctrinally -- just agreeing to disagree and marching along together -- in fellowship!

Just where all these false teachers among us are leading the churches of Christ these days is almost anybody's guess. They do not agree with each other, yet, somehow, those of us still committed to a "*thus saith the Lord*" are supposed to acquiesce and agree with them! NO WAY! If the truth of the gospel is to survive this generation among the churches of Christ, it would appear that our only solution is to get back to the word of the Lord and stay there. As the apostle Peter put it in the long ago, in I Peter 4:11, "*If any many speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...*" On this platform -- and on this platform alone -- is the truth of the gospel AND UNITY even possible.

# *Pharisees Live Again In The Anti Attitude*

Guy F. Hester

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The passage suggested for a text for this discussion is Matthew 16:6. However, I believe that reading verses six through twelve will give us a better foundation for our consideration of this subject.

Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matt. 16:6-12).

The Pharisees and Sadducees were two opposing sects of the Jews. Although they were hostile toward each other, they had formed an alliance to oppose Jesus. The context shows that they had come to Jesus asking Him to show them a sign from heaven. They were not in reality wishing to see a sign but rather they were seeking to entrap Him because they wanted to put Him to death. They believed that if He failed to produce a sign that it would destroy the credibility of His claim to be the promised Messiah and as an imposter He would be killed. They had full knowledge of the miracles

that Jesus had performed, yet they tempted Him, and asked that He show them a sign from heaven. Jesus refused to be put on trial by men; He refused to work a miracle just because they demanded it, but pointed them forward to His death, burial and resurrection, the sign of all signs prefigured in the case of Jonah. He chided them because they claimed to be able to read the signs in the heavens and thereby forecast the weather but they could not read the "*signs of the times*" given in their own Scriptures and tell the time of His coming. Thus, Jesus warns the disciples to beware of the leaven (doctrine) of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Jesus, since the beginning of His ministry, was in constant conflict with the Pharisees, not just because of their refusal to accept His Sonship, but because of their abuses of the Law and their binding their traditions as law. Today we have a great problem with "*anti-ism*" on the one hand and "*liberalism*" on the other hand. The anti brethren will make and bind as law where God has not bound. While the liberal brethren will treat matters of faith as though they were matters of option. The best illustration of the differences between liberalism and antiism that I can think of is one used by brother Thomas B. Warren in his book Lectures On Church Cooperation And Orphan Homes, pages 12, 13, 14.

Let us suppose there is a farmer who has three sons. This farmer wants his cow staked out in a field so that she will be able to eat within this particular area. He doesn't want her to eat beyond it neither does he want her to be tied so short that she cannot go all the way out to here, because there are many valuable plants that she needs to eat within this particular area of one hundred feet. Beyond that distance there are plants that are poison and the farmer doesn't want her to be able to get to them but he does want her to eat all the grass within an hundred feet of the stake. So the farmer gives the first son a long rope with the instructions to stake out the cow and use 100 feet of rope. Now this boy goes out and decides that he will take the liberty of making it 110 feet. That means the cow can go beyond the circle that the farmer wanted her to go and can eat some of the things that the

farmer did not want her to eat. Then the second boy goes out and decides that he will take the liberty of cutting the length down to 90 feet. This means the cow cannot go the distance from the stake that the farmer wanted her to go and is deprived of many of the things that he wanted her to eat. The third boy went out and tied the cow the length the father wanted him to use, 100 feet, so that she could eat everything the farmer wanted her to eat but nothing more.

Now for the application. The 100 foot rope is the "*truth*" rope, the 90 foot rope is the "*anti*" rope and the 110 foot rope is the "*liberal*" rope. Anti-ism binds and restricts and allows less than the truth allows. Liberalism pays no attention to the restrictions of truth and goes beyond the limits of the Word of God. John said,

Whosoever transgresseth, (goeth onward, ASV), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (II John 9).

It is our responsibility to obey the law of God. When God's Word authorizes a thing we must not seek to prohibit one from doing that which is authorized. But on the other hand we are at liberty to do only such things as are authorized in the Word of God.

God's Word says, "*Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*" (James 1:27) and "*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith*" (Gal. 6:10). Anti-ism "*shortens the rope*" and says, "*Saints only.*" In fact, some years ago, brother A. C. Griden, an anti preacher signed a proposition for a debate with the late brother W. L. Totty in which he stated in effect that a church that would take one dime out of its treasury to buy a bottle of milk for a baby that was starving to death would go to hell.

The Word of God tells us that we are to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). We are given liberty as to the method of carrying out this command. But anti-ism says that two or more churches may not cooperate together with one eldership overseeing the work to preach the gospel. What have they done? They have made a law where God has made none. The command in II Timothy 4:2 is to "*preach the*

word." One congregation of God's people may financially support a gospel preacher to go into some mission field or sponsor a radio or television program without any outside assistance or they may seek the help of other congregations of the Lord's church in doing this work. Either way, they are doing exactly what God said do. When the Word of God commands a thing to be done, it is very important that we do that very thing. When the way a thing commanded is to be done is specified, then the way it is to be done is just as important as the thing to be done itself. But when the way it is to be done is not specified, then we must be very careful that we do not make a law where God has made none.

There are many facets of anti-ism. All anti brethren are not anti on the same issues. In addition to the "*saints only*" and the anti-cooperation brethren, there are the "*one cuppers*," anti-Bible class, etc.

The Pharisees were masters of deception. The Pharisees live again in the anti attitude. Thousands have been deceived by the various anti doctrines. We certainly need to beware of their leaven.

Let us now turn our attention to another issue. Recently there have been charges made against some of us who insist on staying within bounds of the Scriptures in matters of faith as being "*new antis*."

For instance, those who are advocating fellowship of the Lord's church with the Christian church are calling those of us who oppose such as unscriptural antis. The advocates of the big (F)s little (f) fellowship doctrine accuse those who believe and teach that only those who "*walk in the light*" (I John 1:7) of being antis.

We have been called antis for insisting that when the church assembles to worship that we must assemble together "*into one place*" (I Cor. 11:20; 14:23). It must be "*the assembling of ourselves together*" (Heb. 10:25).

Elderships are called anti for having stated a "*version policy*." In a number of congregations the elders recognizing the dangers of the proliferation of modern versions and the damage that can be caused by their use have stated that those who read publicly, teach a class or preach may use only the King James Version or the American Standard Version.



Those who would let down the flood gate to the many (per)versions say that elders have no such right and label them as the new antis.

When a false teacher is marked because of his public teaching of false doctrine many brethren will say that we have no such right and call us anti for so doing. Paul said,

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

John warned,

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds (II John 9-11).

It is just as wrong to go beyond the Word of God as it is to stop short of it. The Lord hates those who sow discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16-19). In John 17:20-21 the Lord prayed for the unity of believers. But this unity must have truth as its basis. Unity on any other basis is not the unity for which Jesus prayed.

# ***Prophets Of Old Persecuted And The Righteous Teachers Today Persecuted***

*(Acts 24:23-24)*

**Grady Miller**



And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

The words of our text place the apostle Paul in, for him, familiar surroundings: under house arrest in Caesarea for preaching the gospel of Christ. After his Damascus experience and conversion to Christ, Paul began to preach *"the faith which once he destroyed."* His labors included the establishment of congregations in many distant lands. Indeed, his travels led him across the breadth of the Roman Empire as he preached Christ crucified. We read of no greater servant of the Lord Jesus in all the New Testament.

For all of his successes, however, the apostle also knew setbacks and disappointments. While some received the gospel with thanksgiving and the joy of deliverance as a result of his preaching, others were moved to blaspheme and oppose the might of God. In Damascus, at the very beginning of his efforts, the unbelieving Jews took counsel to kill him (Acts 9:23). He was stoned and left for dead outside Lystra (Acts 14:19). An humbling catalogue of the ill treatment Paul suffered to preach Christ is recorded in II Corinthians 11, and includes imprisonment, beatings, and

torture, stonings and shipwreck, cold and hunger.

While these troubles brought sorrow to the heart of Paul, surely they were no surprise. The quick mind of Saul of Tarsus realized that the enemies of the cross would be outraged when they realized that their former champion had gone over to the enemy; he must have expected a savage retaliation from his former supporters. The Lord also revealed to Ananias, sent to baptize Saul into Christ, that the man of Tarsus was a "*chosen vessel*" and would preach the gospel to the Jew and Gentile; he was also told of the "*great things he must suffer for my name's sake*" (Acts 9:16). It is unthinkable that Ananias would not have felt concern for the new convert and would encourage him to shoulder the burdens he would bear.

Paul was present when Stephen made his defense before the Jerusalem council and heard him accuse his countrymen:

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it (Acts 7:51-53).

How these words must have rung in his ears in the years following! It is, perhaps, more than coincidental that Paul's first recorded sermon, in Antioch of Pisidia, follows much the same outline as Stephen's masterpiece (Acts 13).

Then, too, the apostle knew the Old Testament; he often quoted from it and illustrated his lessons with characters and events recorded in it (Acts 13:16ff; 17:1-3; I Cor. 10:1-14; Gal. 3). Paul may not have written these words but he knew full well their truthfulness:

Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth (Heb. 11:36-38).

Paul knew the story of Jesus' rejection and how He *"came unto His own, and His own received Him not"* (John 1:11). He knew that others would feel as he had before the Lord appeared to him on the Damascus way: *"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"* (Acts 26:9). It is not at all unreasonable to conclude that Paul knew of the hardships that awaited him as he began his work for the Lord.

Why were the prophets of old persecuted? Why did their plea fall upon deaf ears? What prompted Israel of old, the Jew of Jesus' day, and the enemies of the first century church to resist and reject the Word of God? A survey of the Scriptures will show these destructive attitudes and faults that lead to a rejection of Jesus and the Word of God.

## Ignorance

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Ignorance is most certainly not bliss! Neither is it an excuse. One of the lessons that comes with maturity is that we find little relief when we plead *"I didn't know."*

There is no greater tragedy than an ignorance of the will and way of God. Especially so, when that will has been revealed to men and divine guidance has been offered time and again. A plea of ignorance will not save men in that day when Jesus shall return in judgment; His coming will be

...in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (II Thess. 1:8-9).

The ruin and folly of ignorance can best be seen in Israel's failure to receive her own Messiah. While He was the object of praise long before His birth (Isa. 9:6-7) and the focus of every prophet from Samuel on (Acts 3:24), yet during the days of His flesh He was *"despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"* (Isa. 53:3).

Peter indicted Israel with spiritual ignorance in his sermon preached on Solomon's porch in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 3). They had delivered up Jesus to Pilate

(v. 13), denied Him as their King and Messiah (vs. 13-14), and killed the Prince of life (v. 15). The apostle declared, *"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers"* (v. 17). The Jew crucified Jesus through ignorance of their own Law and prophets; our Lord prayed on the cross, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34). The Gentile, too, executed Jesus through ignorance; Paul reasoned that had the princes of this world realized that Jesus is the Son of God *"they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"* (I Cor. 2:8). Still, ignorant though they were, they were not blameless. Israel put Jesus to death with *"wicked hands"* (Acts 2:23). Stephen called it murder (Acts 7:52)!

An ignorance of the gospel of Christ will alienate man from God (Eph. 4:18). Like Saul of Tarsus, it will cause men to do things *"contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"* (Acts 26:9). How sad that so many are not led to walk in the light by what they know, but are kept from the Lord by what they do not know. An eternity in hell is the awful price of spiritual ignorance.

## Prejudice

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Religious prejudice is only a form of spiritual ignorance. The prejudiced man knows what he knows, and feels sure of it, but his knowledge is based on inadequate evidence. He has *"prejudged"* and made up his mind solely on the basis of hearsay, public sentiment, popularity, tradition and personal bias. Prejudice is contrary to common sense, objective investigation, independent thinking and rational behavior. Little wonder that Ambrose Bierce defined it as *"a vagrant opinion without visible means of support."*

II Kings 2 illustrates the poison of prejudice and the destruction it causes. The prophet Elisha was met on the way to Bethel by children who taunted him by saying, *"Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head."* We may infer from Elisha's reaction and subsequent events that here was something more than ordinary childish insensitivity to the feelings of another. The children no doubt took their cue for brutish behavior from their elders, who ridiculed the prophet

in his absence and perhaps even to his face; the children were demonstrating a learned behavior. Elisha was so removed from public favor that his very appearance prompted scorn and mockery from among even the innocents of Israel! These children, no doubt repeating slurs they had learned at home, belittled the man of God and brought ruin to themselves. The seed of prejudice yields an evil crop!

Jesus, too, was rejected by a prejudiced people. Israel had a far different expectation and wanted a different kind of a Messiah than Jesus of Nazareth. The Saviour lamented their foolishness as He likened His rejection with that of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:16-19).

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Prejudice almost caused Nathanael to decline an invitation to meet Jesus; he asked, "*Can there be any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46). Philip's response is the classic challenge to the prejudiced mind: "*Come and see.*" Prejudice prompted Simon the Pharisee to believe that Jesus was not a prophet of God because He allowed a notorious woman to touch Him (Luke 7:36-50). Prejudice made the scholars and philosophers of Athens mock the preaching of Paul (Acts 17). Prejudice provoked the Ephesians to chant for two hours "*Great is the Diana of the Ephesians*" (Acts 19:34). Prejudice led many Gentiles to reject Christ because the cross was, to them, foolishness (I Cor. 1:23).

An attitude that causes one to rigidly and unthinkingly resist the truth of the gospel will rob him of the joy of salvation.

## Rebellion

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While some will spurn Jesus and His invitation out of

ignorance and prejudice, there are others who know the truth but just will not accept it. Surely Cain knew as well as Abel the kind of sacrifice that would please God, but he would not and did not offer it (Gen. 4). Nadab and Abihu's arrogance corrupted the worship of God and brought down fire from heaven that devoured them (Lev. 10). The text shows clearly how Jeroboam knowingly and intentionally led Israel to forsake the worship of God in His temple and to bow down before idols (I Kings 12:26-33). As Jehoiakim listened to the words of Jeremiah that were read to him, he snipped the scroll into pieces and cast them into the fire; *"they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words"* (Jer. 36:24).

The stubborn spirit of rebellion led the Jews in Pilate's judgment hall to cry, *"Crucify him! Crucify him! His blood be on us, and on our children"* (Matt. 27:22-25). In our mind's eye we can see the Jerusalem council, red-faced, ears stopped, fists clenched and fangs bared, hurling Stephen out of their city and stoning him until they had crushed all life from his body (Acts 7:54-60).

The Lord God saw the ugliness of this spirit and denounced it long ago. He authorized His prophet Isaiah to:

Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of the people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed (Isa. 6:9-10).

Isaiah would discover to his sorrow that a message of hope would be Israel's doom; the command to repent would push them further into wickedness; words designed to open eyes and hearts would only make men more determined to be spiritually blind and deaf.

These important words are quoted in the New Testament on four separate occasions. The first is by Jesus as He taught the people by the Sea of Galilee; He declared that the unbelief of His people *"fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah"* (Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10). The second occurs later as Jesus rebukes the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem (John 9:39). Although they had witnessed the

wonders and miracles He had performed, they remained set in their unbelief and rejection. John comments on Jesus' work and the stubborn opposition of His enemies:

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him...Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

The apostle Paul also quoted the words of Isaiah to the Jews that met him when he arrived in Italy (Acts 28:25-27). Their bond to the traditions of their fathers would not let them see the beauty of Christ and the full scope of His gospel.

The spirit of stubbornness and rebellion is seen in Ahab's command to the prophet Micaiah: "*Speak that which is good*" (I Kings 22:13). It is found in the Israel of Isaiah's day: "*That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits*" (Isa. 30:9-10). "*The Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken*" (II Chron. 33:10). God observed that "*the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so*" (Jer. 5:31). Israel rejected the tender appeal of Jeremiah and cast his words back into his teeth: "*As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee*" (Jer. 44:16).

Rebellion is yet in the hearts of men today. The apostle Paul spoke of a time when men would not

...endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (II Tim. 4:3-4).

A coming apostasy would be led by false brethren who had their "*conscience seared with a hot iron*" (I Tim. 4:2). These words forcefully describe our own twentieth century.



## Conclusion

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Spiritual ignorance will cause men to blindly reject the Word of God and resist those who boldly declare it. People perish today too, for a lack of knowledge (cf. Hos. 4:6). Prejudice against the truth of the gospel is a plague in our land today. Men dangle over the yawning pit of hell and will not open their eyes to the way of escape. However, souls steeped in rebellion and an attitude that will not be bound by the law of God pose the greatest threat of all; not only do such men *"oppose themselves"* (Acts 18:6) but they also seek to destroy the faithful messengers of God.

Jesus warned His disciples that their calling included a burden to be borne. He urged those who would follow Him to count the cost (Luke 14:26-33). He cautioned the twelve, *"When they deliver you up..."* (Matt. 10:19). In His last hours with them He spoke of the perils they would soon face and encouraged them to stand faithful to their charge:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: not because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18-21).

We, too, must *"keep that which is committed to our trust"* (I Tim. 6:20). Though the world may war against us, we must hold aloft Christ and the Church.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. (I Cor. 16:13).

# *Not Going Beyond God's Word*

(Mark 11:28)

Max R. Miller

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## **Introduction**

1. Jesus was challenged--By what authority...?
2. Condemnation for adding to God's word
3. I Peter 4:11

## **I. The Apostolically Limited Word (Gal. 1:8-9)**

1. Breathed of God
2. Sanctifies and frees
3. Revealed
4. Eternal
5. Pure
6. Governs faith and practice

## **II. Right And Wrong Attitudes Toward The Word**

1. The apostolic church
2. Second century church
3. Luther's "*hermeneutical principle*"

## **III. Restorationists Respected God's Word**

1. "*Speak where the Bible ..*"
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## **IV. Changed Attitude Among Restorationists**

1. The Martin Luther principle
2. Open door to apostasy
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## **V. The Word And A.D. 1906**

1. Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem
2. Attempts to pervert truth
3. Truth prevails

## **VI. Today--Again A Change Toward The Word**

1. What is truth?
2. Where is authority for....

## Conclusion:

1. Matthew 17:5; John 12:48
2. Prov. 30:6

Jesus was walking in the temple at Jerusalem where He often taught, and as he walked the chief priest, the scribes, and the elders of Israel approached Him and inquired of Him,

By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? (Mark 11:27-28).

Jesus had invaded the sanctimonious holy grounds of the religious leaders of His day. His doctrine was not theirs, His approach to the people caught the eye of the common lot; leaders of the Jewish hierarchy felt threatened by this man from Galilee -- they challenged Him. Although their challenge was unjustified, yet it is generally a good question to ask anyone who begins to speak or act with force, "*By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?*" One should not be offended when one's authority has been questioned, but rather happy to present credentials, proving one's right to say or do.

Through the nearly two thousand years of Christianity there have constantly been those who rise up and speak, or advocate actions, who can claim no authority for what they say or do. Seemingly, the most of them are offended, insulted, or angered when called to establish an authority for their causes. The disciples of those who speak without authority defend their champion in whatever he says or does, but they neither can produce an acceptable authority for their champion's actions.

The glorious cause of Christ has been violated, through the centuries, by those who without authority, add to the word of God. Solemn warning seems not to have been sounded, deaf ears hear not the condemnation for those who pervert God's message:

Ye shall not add unto the words which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye

may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you (Deut. 4:1).

Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:6).

....if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Neither add to, or take from! God could not make a warning, a command more plain.

The Bible is God's book, the expression of His will and authority. The authority of His Word has been delegated to His only begotten Son (Matt. 28:18), who, through the Holy Spirit commissioned and enabled the apostles to speak the oracles of God. He who teaches and preaches in the name of Christ must himself speak as the sacred oracles of God or ever be accursed (I Pet. 4:11).

## Apostolically Limited Word

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Paul declared the gospel which was to be preached was that gospel preached by the apostles: *"If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:8). That apostolically limited word is the product of the creative breath of God Almighty. *"All scripture is inspired of God"* (inspire from *in* in plus *spirare* to breathe), (II Tim. 3:16-17). Holy men of old spoke and wrote the holy oracles of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, they did not speak of themselves (II Pet. 1:20-21). That holy word sanctifies and sets man free from sin and Satan (John 17:17; 8:32). The completeness of God's revelation to man, that is, all that God wanted to say to him, has been fully stated in Holy Scripture. Jude said, nineteen centuries past, it all had been once and for all times delivered to the saints (Jude 3). This

was the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to His apostles that He, after His ascension to glory, would send them another Comforter, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, who would guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:3).

The apostolic gospel has been revealed for all time and eternity. The psalmist declared His truth to endure to all generations (Psm. 100:5); the Lord Jesus echoed that truth by saying, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*" (Matt. 24:35). It is by that word all shall be judged in eternity (John 12:48).

The precious Word is pure, it cannot be mixed or mingled with creeds, or the opinions and doctrines of men. Truth plus a modicum of error is no longer truth. Its purity has been adulterated.

The Christian's life is governed by that doctrine and that doctrine alone. It determines his faith because faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). He is to walk by faith, or to say, his steps in life are to be guided by the sacred word (II Cor. 5:7). He is to shun, yea reject, every doctrine that is any more or any less than the doctrine of Christ. John, an apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote,

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (II John 9-11).

Those who add to, subtract from, or modify, the doctrine of Christ is accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

## Right And Wrong Attitudes Toward The Word

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The apostles and prophets of the first century were content with, "*Thus saith the Lord....*" They claimed no revelation of their own, nor did they attempt to speak in the words of man's wisdom (I Cor. 2:13). Paul came to Corinth, not "*with excellency of speech or of wisdom,*" he came only with the gospel of the crucified Christ (I Cor. 2:1-

5). Peter, to emphasize that his spoken words were of divine revelation said, "*And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*" (I Pet. 1:25). The first century church taught a pure doctrine, consequently, the church grew strong and God was greatly glorified in the church.

By the second century a change of attitude toward the word of God was evident. Men praised the greatness of God's sacred word, they were careful not to violate or expunge the Scriptures, however, they took liberty to add to God's word. There was introduced into Christian worship the use of holy water, the sign of the cross, and prayers for the dead. These additions were to grow in great numbers in the centuries following the death of the apostles and the close of the age of inspiration until finally the church had lost its New Testament identity in doctrine, organization, mission, and Scriptural designation. The age of darkness engulfed the world. Men had perverted God's truth.

A glorious chapter of church history was written by gallant reformers who having rediscovered the pure word of God sought to bring the apostate church once again to the truth. Savonarola, Huss, Wyclif, Tauler, Reuchlin were all courageous and sacrificing men who sought to effect a religious reformation by calling men back to the truth. There was none more courageous or more illustrious than was Germany's Martin Luther. He gave his people the Holy Scriptures in their common language. He led a people away from the apostate church unto a purer religion. However, his great contribution was sullied by a highly improper attitude toward the Holy Scriptures -- a hermeneutical principle. He expressed that principle: if an action in Christian worship is not expressly forbidden the act may be incorporated into the worship and teaching of the church. Luther held to the purity of the text, but with him it was the pure word with the addition of that which seemed good and pleasing to man and supposedly acceptable to God. Luther, the great reformer he was, opened the door to the doctrines and innovations of men. With his "*hermeneutical principle*" he marred the great Reformation Movement and opened the way for the development of multitudes of so-called Protestant Churches that plague the world today.

## Restorationist Respected The Word

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There were men in those churches who owed no debt to the creeds of Protestantism, their allegiance was to God and His Holy Book. Barton Warren Stone (1772-1844), on ordination to the Presbyterian ministry, stated in regard to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the rule of Presbyterianism, he would uphold that creed as far as it *"was in harmony with the Bible."* Barton Stone, Walter Scott, "Raccoon" John Smith, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and many others, were sowers of the seed, *"the seed is the word of God"* (Luke 8:11). Their motto was, *"Speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where the Bible is silent -- call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways."* Quoting book, chapter, and verse from the Bible characterized their preaching.

Those who preached and taught, giving Bible authority for that they preached, were able by that word to restore New Testament Christianity to the world. And not only that, they saw the cause of Christ flourish in a mighty way and fill the land. The Lord's church was spread across the world, made possible by the preaching of the gospel of Christ without additions, subtractions, or modifications. Christ Jesus was their creed, His word their doctrine.

## Changed Attitude Among Restorationist

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With the passing of time there developed a change of attitude toward God's word. The Martin Luther *"hermeneutical principle"* developed among the disciples: *"If a thing is not expressly forbidden by Scripture, yet seems good and beneficial to the worshipper, if it is believed it would please God, then that thing (whatsoever) may be incorporated into Christian worship."* The changed attitude toward God's word opened the way for first the American Christian Missionary Society, then the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, the pastor system, the Board of Elders and other doctrines and practices foreign to New Testament teaching. The apostasy was to be revisited

on Zion, the glorious cause of Christ was once again to go into an apostasy simply because there were additions made to the word of God.

## A.D. 1906

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Courageous efforts were made to draw God's people back to the old Jerusalem gospel -- only to fail. By the year 1906, historically, the division was clearly marked. Once again men were to stand and call for the Old Paths by preaching the unadulterated gospel of Christ. The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was the story of starting over again. This they did. Having lost almost all their meeting houses, brotherhood of preachers, and most of the members, they again restored New Testament Christianity and glorified the cause of Christ by preaching the pure gospel of Christ.

Even in those times and afterward there would be those who would attempt to adulterate the truth by introducing false doctrines. Premillennialism, the war question, various anti doctrines (no Sunday school, no printed class literature, one cup, orphans, evangelism) made threatening inroads. Truth stood in its glory and damaging threats were nullified. The ship of Zion was safe, its course was true, and God was glorified. Truth prevailed and the church prospered and grew.

The greatest expansion of the Lord's church since early days of the movement in the nineteenth century were the post World War II years. A world hungering and thirsting after righteousness was fed the pure word of God. Multitudes were converted to Christ. His truth was marching on.

## Today, A Changed Attitude

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The past few years has seen a marked change in attitude toward the word of God. Unbelievably, the problem exists today -- what is truth? Where is truth to be found? Is truth attainable, accessible, knowable? In answer to the question, what is truth, an attitude responds saying, "We



*don't know,"* another chimes, *"We don't care,"* and yet another, *"So what!"*

Evidence of this? Family Life Centers, places for the entertainment of members of the church; nothing more than recreation halls, gymnasiums, dining halls. Where is Scriptural authority? Title and rank among brethren: Jesus said call no man father, master, and today He would say Doctor. Award presentations for those who do service in His kingdom. He today would say to the plaques, *"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which were commanded you say, we are unprofitable servants: We have done that which was our duty to do"* (Luke 17:10). Furthermore, evangelistic organizations independent of the church and therefore not under the oversight of the church or its elders, such as World Christian Broadcasting, a *"missionary society"* on par with the American Christian Missionary Society of the First Christian Church of the last century. To this kind would be added colleges and other secular schools in the church budget, independent secular organizations drawing from the treasury of the Lord Jesus Christ. This type work is the function of the home, not the church. The following syllogism demonstrates the unscripturalness of supporting such independent works as here named from the Lord's treasury:

- |                       |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Major Premise:</b> | All work of the church as a corporate body is under the oversight of the church and its elders.                                                                       |
| <b>Minor Premise:</b> | The work of preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ is a work of the church as a corporate body.                                                                  |
| <b>Conclusion:</b>    | Therefore, the work of preaching and teaching the gospel when done by the church as a corporate body, is to be done under the oversight of the church and its elders. |

Whatsoever duty is bound upon the church as a corporate

body, the church may and should perform under the leadership of its elders, if elders it does have. If it is right (Scriptural) to contribute from the Lord's treasury to teach the gospel through humanly formed and independent (of the church) organizations, by what rule can it be Scripturally wrong to preach the gospel through a humanly formed organization (independent of the church) called a missionary society?

## Conclusion

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At the mount of transfiguration God said, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"* (Matt. 17:5). Jesus said, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). The church is safe only when it takes its stand for the truth, on the truth, and on the truth only.

Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

# *God's Message By Hosea*

**Dan Jenkins**

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To appreciate the marvelous message that God delivered through His servant Hosea one must learn two things. First the historical setting in which the book was written and then, secondly, the events in the life of Hosea that serve as a basis for the Divine message. When these two things are properly understood this book is one of the richest found anywhere within the Bible.

## **The Historical Background**

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Hosea lived at one of the most trying times in the history of the nation of Israel. To go back two hundred years before his day is to be in the midst of the glorious reign of king Solomon. The godly life of David had brought the kingdom to the heights of spiritual greatness. This was followed by the riches of Solomon's reign in which the temple became a reality and the treasures of the world flowed to Jerusalem. The death of Solomon shattered the dreams of his subjects and soon there were two kingdoms -- Judah in the south and Israel in the north. Time and space does not allow us to follow the workings of God among His people in Jerusalem. We turn instead our attention to Israel -- that kingdom in the north to which Hosea's message is delivered.

## **The Northern Kingdom Of Israel**

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When Jeroboam became king of the new kingdom of Israel his first act was an act of rebellion when he erected golden calves as gods, appointed those not of the tribe of

Levi as the priests, and perverted the worship of God. This set the tone for all the kings that followed. Jehovah was not God -- Baal was! In the history of all the kings that followed, there never was a king who followed Jehovah. When help was needed, the people turned to Baal or other gods of the nations around them.

Look briefly at the inspired evaluation of these rulers of this northern kingdom found in I Kings. *"And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father (15:26)...And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in the sin wherewith he made Israel to sin (15:34)...for all of the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam (16:7)...and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities (16:13)...his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin (16:19)...Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him (16:25)...Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all there were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethball king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him (16:30, 31)...And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (22:52).*

The kings of Israel that followed these, as recorded in II Kings, are no better. *"And he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom (3:2, 3)...But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin (10:31)...And he did that which was evil in the sight of the*

*Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom (13:2)...And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: but he walked therein (13:11)...Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (14:23, 24).*

There is it. The most sordid picture in the existence of any nation. Read it again and weep. God's glorious nation divided and, as far as that northern kingdom was concerned, there never was a king who feared God. How the heart of God must have ached as He saw His chosen people whom He had led from the bondage of Egypt into the land flowing with milk and honey turn from Him never to return. The kingdom of Israel began in rebellion to God when Jeroboam ascended to the throne and never repented. This is the world into which God sent His messenger, Hosea.

## God's Message To Hosea

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How thrilled Hosea must have been when God first spoke to him. Imagine the honor of being a chosen vessel through whom God would again speak to the rebellious nation. Yet the demands of God are not always those we might desire and such was the case with Hosea. How strange must have been God's instructions to the prophet.

Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord (Hos. 1:2).

A wife of whoredom! Surely God would not choose that kind of woman for the mate of a prophet -- yet this is exactly what He did! Obediently, Hosea finds his wife, Gomer, and soon three children are born to this union. If there had been any happiness in the home in those early years it was shattered by Gomer's return to her former life as a harlot. The message of God came again to the prophet, "*Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress...*"

(Hos. 3:1). The faithful devotion of Hosea is seen when he seeks Gomer out the second time. How degrading it must have been for Hosea as the prophet buys her for silver and barley and then brought her back to their home. Hear his words, *"Thou shalt abide for me many days: thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee"* (Hos. 3:3).

## ~~~~~ God's Message From Hosea ~~~~~

Before returning to a discussion of the unusual life of Hosea, let us turn to the book. We shall look at the book from three perspectives -- each designed to give us a greater understanding of God's message and messenger. These three overviews are: (1) The condition of Israel; (2) The certainty of God judgment against this condition; and (3) The depth of God's love for wayward Israel.

### I. The Condition Of Israel (Verses in parenthesis)

She has played the harlot (2:5)

She looked to other gods (3:1)

There is no truth, mercy, knowledge of God in  
the land (4:1)

Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery,  
blood (4:2)

New wine takes away heart (4:11)

Ask counsel of stocks, a whoring from  
God (4:12)

Sacrifice on mountains, hills, oaks, poplars,  
elms (4:13)

Daughters commit whoredom, spouses commit  
adultery (4:13)

Joined to idols -- let him alone (4:17)

Goodness is as the early morning dew (6:4)

Priest commit murder; they commit lewdness  
(6:9)

A horrible thing -- Israel is defiled (6:10)

King is glad with wickedness (7:3)

They are all adulterers (7:4)

There is none that calls upon God (7:7)  
Like a silly dove, calling to Egypt, to Assyria  
(7:11)  
Like a deceitful bow (7:16)  
Has cast off that which is good (8:3)  
Set up kings not approved by God (8:4)  
Have hired lovers (8:9)  
Counted God's great law as strange things  
(8:12)  
Have forsaken their Maker (8:14)  
Is like an empty vine (10:1)  
Swore falsely in making covenants (10:4)  
They plowed wickedness and were reaping  
it (10:13)  
Prone to backsliding (11:7)  
They sin more and more; they kiss the calves  
(13:2)  
They have rebelled against God (13:16)

## **II. The Certainty Of God's Judgment (Verses in parenthesis)**

No more mercy for Israel, utterly taken away  
(1:7)  
No longer God's people. He no longer their  
God (1:9)  
Israel will be stripped naked (2:3)  
Corn, wine, wool and flax to fail (2:9)  
No deliverance from the hand of God (2:10)  
Mirth, feast days, sabbaths to cease (2:11)  
To be many days without a king, prince,  
sacrifice (3:4)  
Priest and prophets to cease (4:4)  
Destroyed for lack of knowledge, rejected  
by God (4:6)  
Judgment of God toward Israel (5:1)  
Israel shall fall in her sins (5:5)  
They shall seek God, but be unable to find Him  
(5:6)  
God to be as a moth to Israel (5:12)  
God to be as a lion to Israel (5:14)

God to spread His net on them (7:12)  
 Destruction to be upon Israel (7:13)  
 God's trumpet of judgment blown upon  
     Israel (8:1)  
 The calf of Israel shall be broken (8:6)  
 God rejects their sacrifices (8:13)  
 God will send fire upon the cities (8:14)  
 Judgment is coming -- no place for  
     rejoicing (9:1)  
 Wine and winepress shall fail (9:2)  
 Israel heading for certain bondage and  
     captivity (9:3)  
 Destruction to end feast days (9:6)  
 Israel's glory to fly away as a bird (9:11)  
 God to give her miscarrying wombs and dry  
     breasts (9:14)  
 God will love them no more (9:15)  
 King to be cut off like foam on the water (10:7)  
 King shall be utterly cut off (10:15)  
 Lord to reward shed blood by shedding blood  
     (12:14)  
 Israel to be as chaff, dew, clouds, smoke (13:3)  
 God to be as a leopard to Israel (13:7)  
 God to be as a bear to Israel (13:8)  
 God to tear and devour them (13:8)  
 God to take away their king in His wrath (13:11)  
 Samaria, the captial city, to become desolate  
     (13:16)

### **III. The Depth Of God's Love (Verses in parenthesis)**

Ye are sons of the living God (1:10)  
 God pleads and pleads with Israel (2:1)  
 God offers a door of hope -- the valley of  
     Achor (2:15)  
 God longs to have mercy (2:23)  
 Israel to return from coming captivity (3:5)  
 God awaits the repentance of Israel (5:15)  
 God wants to heal the torn, the smitten (6:1)  
 God bewildered as to how to touch Israel's  
     heart (6:4)



God longs to heal Israel (7:1)  
 God found Israel as wild grapes, planted them  
 (9:10,13)  
 God longs for Israel to sow righteousness  
 (10:12)  
 God loved Israel in her infancy (11:1)  
 God taught infant Israel to walk (11:3)  
 God drew them with bands of love (11:4)  
 The thought of rejecting Israel is too much  
 for God (11:8)  
 God struggles to give them judgment due them  
 (11:9)  
 God offers new tabernacles for their dwelling  
 place (12:9)  
 God promises ransom from the grave, from  
 death (13:9)  
 God's final plea to return (14:1)  
 God's final offer to heal their backsliding  
 (14:4)

## Hosea's Unusual Life

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We return again to the unusual life of Hosea. Perhaps now we can understand why God would command His prophet to marry a harlot. The key to comprehending this is to recognize that the love God expected Hosea to have for unfaithful Gomer is parallel to the love God had for Israel. When Israel received the covenant at Mt. Sinai they were married to the God of heaven. Note the words of Isaiah,

For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is  
 his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel;  
 The God of the whole earth shall be called. For the  
 Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved  
 in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast  
 refused, saith thy God (Isa. 54:5-6).

Through Jeremiah God pleaded, *"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you..."* (Jer. 3:14). Paul shows the same concept of this marriage by saying, *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to*

*another, even to him who is raised from the dead..."* (Rom. 7:4).

Unfortunately Israel forgot about her marriage vows to the God of heaven. The words of God to Hosea and his children are identical to the message God had for His bride, Israel. *"For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink"* (Hos. 2:5). God further said to Israel, *"And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord"* (Hos. 2:13). Instead of being the faithful obedient wife, Israel forsook God to seek other gods. Jeremiah describes this kind of fornication by saying, *"...she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks (trees NKJ)"* (Jer. 3:9). Hear him again, *"Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord"* (Jer. 2:20).

How could the God of heaven let His unfaithful bride know that He still loved them and longed for their return? What better way than by showing His love through the life of His prophet, Hosea. As God has married a disobedient nation so now His prophet was commanded to marry an immoral woman. As God sought His unfaithful bride, Israel, so now His prophet was to seek unfaithful Gomer. Could there be any doubt about either the love of Hosea or of God? Israel could never say, *"God does not love me; He does not want me to return to Him."* He had shown His unending love by the life of His prophet. Hosea's continuing love for God was a perfect representation of God's love for Israel.

However, the message from Hosea also showed that God would finally bring judgment against Israel if she did not repent. History shows that this is exactly what happened. Less than fifty years later the kingdom fell to the Assyrian army. The Divine record states,

And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of

spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria... (II Kings 17:20-23).

## Lessons For Us

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The practical lessons for us today from this wonderful book are unending. As Israel of old was married to God so the church is married to God. If Israel could be expected to see in the life of Hosea just how much God loved them, so we should see in the same story His wonderful love for us. The son of God came to seek and save the lost and never overlooked the outcasts of society. It is interesting to note His great appeal was to publicans and harlots. Our God loves the unlovable. We also should never lose sight that God longs for our fellowship and longs for our return when we too *"play the harlot."* The prodigal son's reception when he returned home is evidence of God's love for us.

Another lesson we must learn is to see how God hates sinful rebellion. Look again at the list of sins describing the spiritual condition of Israel in the book of Hosea. We must never allow these to be in our lives. It is folly to study the Old Testament and never profit from it by ignoring either His goodness or His holiness.

Finally we must learn from the book of the blessings God longs to give to us. See the struggle that God had in giving up Israel and then reflect on what wonderful blessings they missed because of their rebellion. If God's blessings on us when we were lost lead us to salvation, think of how great His blessing will be for us as we are His faithful children, the glorious bride of Christ.

Read this book often. Your life will be enriched every time you meditate on it!

# ***Jeremiah, The Weeping Prophet***

*Jeremiah 9:1; 13:17)*

**Max R. Miller**

## **Introduction**

1. Much sadness in the life of Jeremiah
2. His tender nature repulsed by his unpleasant mission
3. His "*negative*" prophecy held a glorious hope for Israel

## **I. JEREMIAH: THE MAN AND PROPHET**

1. Jeremiah 1:1
2. Called to office of prophet (1:1-10)
3. An unwilling, willing servant (1:6; 20:7-9)
4. Great love for his people Israel
5. Similarities of his life and that of Jesus
6. Last known activity of Jeremiah 43; 44

## **II. ISRAEL: HIS NATION AND LOVE**

1. Israel was a whorish nation (3:1-2)
2. Blind, deaf to God's way (5:21)
3. Incurable (6:15)
4. Babylon, God's afflicting rod
5. Doomed to captivity
6. Restoration

## **III. PROPHET OF NEW COVENANT (31:31-34)**

1. Prophet of Israel's doom
2. Israel deserved destruction
3. Sinai covenant
4. A new covenant
5. Jesus, mediator of a better covenant

## **Conclusion:**

1. God's grace made provision for the new covenant
2. Man is to embrace the covenant by obedience

Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears: that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (Jer. 9:1)

Jeremiah lived and prophesied in the most difficult and tragic years of Israel's history. He witnessed one by one the departure of all prospects of social and religious reformation and any possibility of deliverance from impending national ruin. The tone of his writing is the language of holy grief and sorrow; his was prophecy of sorrow and affliction (Matt. 2:17-18).

Jeremiah was a young man of tender emotions when called by God for the great work that lay before him. Tender and loving, yet faithful to the task, he is seen as one standing in a hostile world, fearless and unmovable. For forty years he sounded forth his mournful warnings and searching rebukes, dashed the false hopes of unfaithful priests and false prophets, and thus brought upon himself the charge of treachery, treason and desertion. In the midst of gloom and darkness he held fast to trust in God, and in the stormy sunset of prophecy he beheld the dawn of a new covenant of the gospel written on the heart (Jer. 31:31-34). The new covenant, the new and living way, was not only the hope of sinful Israel, but the hope of the race of man for in it only would be the ultimate forgiveness of sins. That covenant of the uncertain future days of Jeremiah's time would be written in the blood of man's redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:28). Jeremiah was to warn Israel and guide her until "*a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel*" (Num. 24:17), who would seal the covenant with His redeeming blood, the Christ of God. Only briefly here can we speak of Jeremiah the weeping prophet and his great work with God and His people.

## Jeremiah, the Man and the Prophet

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More is known of the personal life of Jeremiah than any other of the prophets. Jeremiah discloses his innermost feelings, laying bare the emotional conflicts of a man chosen of God for a task that was contrary to his personality and

natural inclinations of life.

Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, was of the sacerdotal race. No special traces of his priestly descent are found in the book of the prophet. His home was at Anathoth in the boundary of Benjamin some three miles northeast of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah was ordained a prophet from birth. He received his call to the office of prophet as a young man, probably at the age of sixteen to twenty. His call came in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josiah (627 B.C., Jer. 1:1-5). Jeremiah, as others have, surely thought God had called the wrong man for this difficult mission. Like Moses, Jeremiah deferred, saying, "*Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child*" (Jer. 1:6; cf. Exod. 3:11; 4:1, 10). God, confident of His choice, assures Jeremiah he would be adequate for all occasions; furthermore, God would give him protection: "*Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak...I am with thee to deliver thee*" (Jer. 1:7-8). God would guard Jeremiah as "*a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, and against the people of the land*" (Jer. 1:7-8, 18).

Jeremiah's mission was that of salvage; to root up, to separate, and ultimately to build and renew. "*See, I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant*" (Jer. 1:10). Was Jeremiah too young, too tender! He would prevail in all God's work in the times of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah who was to be the last king of Israel to sit on David's earthly throne, and for a time afterward.

One sees Jeremiah as "*an unwilling willing servant*," one who began with reluctance, self doubts, and fears. He did not wish his commission, it did not befit his tender and gentle nature. In the face of trials, imprisonment, threats of death, abandonment, false accusations, "*because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily*," he vowed, "*I will not make mention of him, nor speak anymore in his name*" (Jer. 20:8-9). He wanted to

stop, to step aside, to quit, not even to mention the name of God. However, there was a compulsion within him that demanded he do God's bidding -- *"his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay"* (Jer. 20:9). His New Testament counterpart, Paul the apostle, stated Jeremiah's sentiment and that of all who *"must preach the gospel,"* by saying *"...for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"* (I Cor. 9:16). Jeremiah's commitment to God and to Israel could not be suppressed for he possessed an insatiable hope, his spirit was unquenched, and his strength unabated. It was his to do the will of the heavenly Father.

No man had a greater love for his people Israel than did Jeremiah. They were treading treacherous grounds, their tragic fate lay before them. Jeremiah's heart was burdened because of their rejection of him, his kinsmen in the flesh, and for the physical suffering and doom that lay before his countrymen.

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (Jer. 9:1)

He had no adequate expression for his grief. His love for Israel was as the love of Hosea for Gomer, an unrequited love. In the place of love Israel returned hatred and abuse. His fellow citizens, his life long friends, and neighbors of his beloved Anathoth, plotted his death, yea, *"even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they had dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee"* (Jer. 11:21; 12:6). Even his mother?

There are many similarities that parallel the life of Jeremiah with that of Christ's. The Lord Jesus wept over the city of lost Jerusalem, He wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus. Jeremiah wept for Jerusalem and the land, his friends and brothers in Israel. Piety, holiness, innocence, compassion, bravery is typified in each. Jesus was the Lamb of God made ready for slaughter, Jeremiah spoke of himself, saying,

I was dumb like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter.

Enemies alike conspired against them:

Let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered (Jer. 11:19; cf. Isa. 53:9).

The twenty-second psalm, a Messianic psalm, is also befitting of the life of Jeremiah:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Might this be a psalm penned by Jeremiah?

Jeremiah the weeping prophet was also God's suffering prophet. From the time of his call until Judah's fall and captivity he was a victim of his countrymen, often imprisoned at best in the King's palace, more often in mirey cisterns, fed only bread and water, ridiculed, accused of sedition and betrayal of his nation -- this was the life of God's servant.

Jeremiah prophesied of Babylon's invasion and occupation of Palestine. Some of the Israelites, seeking to escape the sword, the famine, the pestilence, fled to Egypt, carrying Jeremiah captive with them. The last recorded notation of his work is his reproving the Jews in Egypt for joining in the pagan festival worship of the Egyptian Queen of Heaven at Pathros. Although captive and in a strange land, he continued to love his people and to call for their repentance. It is commonly thought Jeremiah died in Egypt.

## Israel, His Nation And His Love

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The nation of Israel is cast in the image of a wife, one married to God. Israel has been unfaithful in that she has shared her affection and allegiance to God with false deities, the gods of pagan nations. (This figure is especially strong in Hosea). Jeremiah accuses her,

Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places [idol temples on the mountains], and see where thou hast not been lien with -- she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot (Jer. 3:1-2, 6).

Israel was a whorish nation, giving her love and loyalty not to God, but to other gods and nations.



Israel had become insensitive to God's truth. Jeremiah cries to them, *"O foolish people and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not: which have ears, and hear not"* (Jer. 5:21). Satan, the god of this world, had blinded the minds of them which believe not (II Cor. 4:4). Encrusted in sin Israel had become hopelessly incorrigible, without a conscience before God. Jeremiah asks, *"were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush..."* (Jer. 6:15). A glaring contrast is seen in God's people who had been purified in the fires of trial and bondage on their return from Babylon. Ezra later speaks for a chastised Israel: *"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens"* (Ezra 9:6). Their habitual unfaithfulness had molded them a character that could not be changed: *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil"* (Jer. 13:23). *"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart and upon the horns of your altars"* (Jer. 17:1). So it was throughout the land and its peoples; *"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"* (Jer. 5:31). The dumb creatures of forest and field were more obedient to nature's law and authority than was Israel to God's law:

Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord (Jer. 8:7).

As God had afflicted the idolatrous northern tribes with the cruel Assyrians, *"the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation"* (Isa. 10:5), he would chastise Judah with the whip of Babylon. Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar were to be the avenging servants of Jehovah (Jer. 25:8-11). The Babylonians would come down from the north with great destruction, *"and they shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion"*

(Jer. 6:22-23). Jeremiah has a place for Babylon in Israel's book of sorrow; the word Babylon appears in his writings some one hundred and sixty-five times. There is no history of Israel without Babylon. She will utterly desolate and destroy Judah with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence. *"And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities desolate, without an inhabitant"* (Jer. 9:11). Not only destruction and barrenness awaited sinful Judah; she would be uprooted from her beloved home land, carried away into a strange land far to the east and there in bondage serve the heathen for three score and ten dreadful years: *"And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years"* (Jer. 25:11).

Jeremiah held forth a flickering lamp of prophecy to Israel: would she see it? He preached: a repentant nation would afterward be restored to their home land, the land promised unto father Abraham, and they again in peace and prosperity would dwell in the land of their fathers,

for, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave their fathers, and they shall possess it -- and the city shall be builded upon her own heap -- And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God (Jer. 30:3, 18, 22).

There was to be the physical restoration of the thirteen tribes to the land of Israel and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, her walls, and the temple, but much more than physical restoration was planned. Jeremiah pronounces an end of Israel's servitude to Babylon, saying,

I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them (Jer. 30:8-9).

The future King David would be Jesus Christ, one of the loins of David after the flesh, and who would rule and reign on David's promised throne (Acts 2:29-36). Israel had a sustaining hope through the dreary years of bondage in Babylon, and a far greater hope in the coming Messianic

kingdom of Christ, the anointed of God. Their hardened hearts, wilfully dull ears, and blind eyes made them insensible to such a wonderful prophecy of Israel's coming glory. Old Israel was doomed to much sorrow and affliction.

## Prophet Of The New Covenant

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Jeremiah, for forty years, was a doomsday prophet to Israel. His preaching warned them constantly of God's coming afflictions because of their idolatry. He pronounced the burden of captivity, it was inevitable. He sang the dirge *"of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence."* Israel, in rebellion, could hear only his doomsday prophecies and his bitter words of rebuke, therefore they misunderstood his mission, they opposed him fervently, and hated him. In all this, in his deepest and darkest hour of affliction, Jeremiah loved his people, he never renounced them. Jeremiah was Israel's bleeding heart:

For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? (Jer. 8:21-22).

Judah and all Israel was not worthy of the healing balm. She rightly deserved destruction, annihilation, for her obedience. God had come to His people even as a husband comes to his wife. He had showered upon His bride His love and tender care. She had been unfaithful -- yet, God would continue to bless her because of His promised seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15) that passed on to faithful Abraham, *"And, in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"* (Gen. 22:18). God passes the seed promise to Isaac. Jacob, and to the twelve sons of Jacob, and couched the seed in Judah. At Sinai He made a covenant with all Israel. By His grace and goodness, they were His nation and people and through them the promised seed would come, and that seed was Christ (Gal. 3:16). But -- Israel broke His covenant; they remained not true to their God and went awhoring after the false gods of the nations. Jeremiah called Israel to a return to the old paths

and to walk in the good way, and to find rest for their souls, but they refused; "*We will not walk therein*" was their reply (Jer. 6:16). God was no longer bound to the Sinai covenant. Israel had broken it and "*then God turned, and gave them up*" (Acts 7:42).

God would not leave His people without hope. That hope was offered in the promise of a new covenant, one He would one day make with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man, his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The new covenant would not be like the Sinai covenant: limited in duration of time, limited to a minority people, a covenant that was weak and unprofitable in that it provided not for the remission of sins (Heb. 7:18), its blood of bulls and goats constantly on Israel's altar could not take away sins (Heb. 10:4). The new covenant is of the heart and prevails over external and ritualistic acts. It was to be a covenant of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Through it God would provide all things

that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (II Pet. 1:2-4).

The new covenant, written in the blood of Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:28), that new and living way (Heb. 10:20), was the way to forgiveness and salvation. The glorious promise

was, *"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."* This is the new covenant, or new testament of Jesus Christ. He is *"the mediator of the new covenant"* (Heb. 12:24), *"by which we draw nigh unto God"* (Heb. 7:19); *"a better covenant, which was established upon better promises"* (Heb. 8:6). The Christ said, *"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Heb. 10:9-10).

In Him, the Christ of God, and in His matchless covenant of grace and love is salvation for the race. That covenant was ratified in heaven, sealed by His precious blood, and offered to man by Peter's preaching that great Pentecost sermon: Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, Christ glorified (Acts 2). Mankind embraces the covenant by hearing the gospel of Christ, believing Jesus to be the Christ, repenting of one's sins, and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins and there having sins remitted, washed away in the sacred blood of Jesus the Christ (Acts 2; 22:16; Rev. 1:5).

One would think that God would be pleased with His faithful and loving servant Jeremiah. His life was truly a bright lamp in the darkest days of Israel's history. Had the nation heeded the words of the prophet they would have been spared the tragedy that befell them all.

The goodness and severity of God is seen in the Book of Jeremiah. The severity of His wrath is poured out without measure upon self-willed and impenitent man, even those of His calling. It is seen too, He held aloft the light of hope of eternal salvation in Christ Jesus.

# *The Holy Spirit Promised*

(Joel 2:28-32)

Grady Miller



And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. (Joel 2:28-32).

Joel's remarkable prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the "*last days*" is one of the most important Old Testament passages the New Testament student must understand. It has been said that "*Joel's prophecy is the key to understanding what the New Testament teaches about the Holy Spirit.*"<sup>1</sup> Acts chapter two, which records the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, has been called "*the hub of the Bible.*"<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Joel 2 and Acts 2 may be likened to twin supports of a suspension bridge; Joel 2 looks ahead to a new day and dispensation of God's dealings with men, and Acts 2 teaches that this long awaited day has now dawned.

The importance of Joel's prophecy may also be seen

by the dangers and serious errors that a misunderstanding will produce. Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement misinterpret the purpose of miraculous gifts and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the extent of their duration, recognize no time limit on the giving of these spiritual powers, and contend that the Spirit operates today in a direct and miraculous manner separate and apart from the word of God. Premillennialists imagine that Joel's prophecy is concerned with Jesus' return to this world and the establishment of an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Joel 2 and Acts 2 must be twisted to support these contentions.

Seeing, then, that a correct interpretation of Joel's prophecy is vital to our understanding of the mission and function of the Spirit let us examine this passage in some detail.

## Background Of The Prophecy

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We have little certain knowledge about the personal and biographical details of Joel's life. His name ("*Jehovah is God*") was rather common in his day, and the text declares that he was the son of Pethuel (1:1). Beyond this, we must sort and sift our way through the particulars of his preaching in order to uncover additional information about the prophet and his times. Because he refers to the temple and the priesthood in Jerusalem (1:9,13,14; 2:15) it seems likely that Joel was a prophet of Judah. Although the dating of his prophecy has been disputed -- from the ninth century B.C. all the way to the Maccabean period -- it seems certain that Joel ministered in the eighth century B.C. before the Exile.<sup>4</sup> While most conservative Bible students believe Obadiah to be the earliest of the writing prophets, a few regard Joel as the first; *"if this is true, his prophecies become even more challenging as he grandly outlines prophetic history, scanning not only the mountain peaks of judgments and blessings of his own people, but leading us also to the great Pentecost of A.D. 33 and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh."*<sup>5</sup>

The book of Joel opens with a graphic description of a

locust plague and famine that decimated the land of Israel.<sup>6</sup> This invasion was so destructive that all vegetation was destroyed and both man and beast endured tremendous suffering (1:12, 14-15); the people are described as young widows mourning their husbands (1:8) and helpless in the face of doom (2:6). The locusts are vividly portrayed as an unconquerable army sweeping over the land and destroying everything in their path (2:4-10).<sup>7</sup>

Joel saw clearly that the plague of locusts in the land resulted from Israel's failure to obey her God. The locusts answer to the voice of the Lord (2:11), who is able to recall as well as send them. That the plague of locusts is also a judgment of the Lord is seen by Joel's declaration that this calamity is *"the day of the Lord"* (1:15; 2:1,11). The punishment *"at hand"* is *"great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"*

The ruin and destruction caused by the locusts foretold other divine judgments that would come upon the ungodly. Harrison contends that *"Joel saw in the devastation wrought by the locusts a symbol of the awesome crisis to come, in which God would preside in judgment over men and nations."*<sup>8</sup>

Israel could be delivered only through a national repentance, a rending of the heart (2:13). Joel commanded the people to fast and cry unto the Lord in a solemn assembly (1:14; 2:15); the priests were told to weep and pray that Jehovah would spare His people (2:17). And, if the people would turn from their wickedness, the blessings of God would be renewed (2:18ff). If Israel would only *"lament"* and *"repent"* she would *"eat in plenty, and be satisfied"* (2:26). The peace from God that would result from Israel's repentance would remind the Jew -- again -- that the Lord was *"in the midst of Israel;" "I am the Lord your God, and none else"* (2:27).

It is in this context that our assigned passage must be understood. Joel 2:28 marks a definite transition, one that will be developed throughout the rest of the book. The verses immediately prior are concerned with the material blessings God would bestow upon His penitent people; the parched and barren land would again receive rain from above



and be restored. But, "*afterward*" the prophet foresaw an outpouring of the Spirit in a measure never before realized. The "*day of the Lord*" was not only a divine judgment and instrument of wrath upon Israel (1:15; 2:1,11); a coming "*day of the Lord*" would be brought against all men, Jew and Gentile alike (2:13; 3:14). Yet, there would be deliverance for those who would "*call on the name of the Lord*" (2:32).

Joel sees the ultimate unfolding of God's redemption for His people, a day of salvation for "*the remnant whom the Lord shall call*" (2:32). His prophecy is a broad and sweeping view of the age when God's spiritual blessings would be poured out upon "*all flesh*." The deliverance he envisioned was far greater than even the renewing of a stricken land and the physical salvation of a desperate people. Indeed, Joel saw a spiritual deliverance and blessing for all that would be realized in the "*last days*" (Acts 2:17).

## Highlights Of The Prophecy

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Among the more remarkable features of Joel's prediction we may notice these specific points.

The time frame of the prophecy is indefinite, except for the mention of "*afterward*" (v. 28). The prophet gave no exact and tight timetable; the age of deliverance would come at some time in the future. Certainly, the prophets of old -- including Joel -- did not see and comprehend the complete unfolding of God's scheme of redemption in every detail (I Peter. 1:10-12); these matters were a "*mystery*" to those who lived on the other side of the Cross but not, of course, to us (Eph. 1:9-10; Col. 1:26). Joel did not plainly declare all that would take place before "*the fulness of time*" was come and God would send forth His Son (Gal. 4:4). While he lived the northern kingdom of Israel still existed, Solomon's temple yet stood, the birth of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great were hundreds of years distant, and Rome was no more than a mean village of mud huts. Yet, Joel realized that in God's own due time His plan would be put into force.

Joel vividly depicted the new era of God's blessings as an age when He would "*pour out*" His Spirit upon all flesh. This phrasing is important. There would be an abundance of the Spirit<sup>9</sup> never before received by men. Surely, it is more than coincidental that God, speaking through Joel (Acts 2:17), chose such wording at a time when the land of Israel was reeling under famine and drought. Just as the earth would drink of the blessing of rain (v. 23), a greater outpouring would descend from heaven to renew and provide for men.

Certainly, the Spirit of God dwelt in men before, during and after the time of Joel. Joshua was a man "*in whom is the spirit*" (Num. 27:18). The Spirit of the Lord was upon Othniel (Judg. 3:9-10), Gideon (Judg. 6:34), Jephthah (Judg. 11:29) and Samson (Judg. 13:25) in the storied days of Israel's judges. David received the Spirit and spoke by Him (I Sam. 16:13; II Sam. 23:2) even as He departed from King Saul. "*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (II Pet. 1:21) long before the coming of Jesus in the flesh. But, Joel saw an outpouring of the Spirit. The day would dawn when not just a few would be filled with the Spirit, and these being exceptional men; instead, many would receive this spiritual waterfall.

The "*all flesh*" of Joel's vision extended to men and women, young and old, from the lowly to the mighty. The blessings of God would not be reserved by rank or station. God's covenant with men would be universal and not limited to Abraham's physical seed. The new arrangement would be one of free and unrestricted access. The instruction of the Lord -- and, therefore, His calling -- would be to all peoples.

The transitory nature of this passage stands clear. Joel not only saw beyond the immediate revival that Israel would know in his own day, but he gave voice to a fuller blessing God would bestow upon men in an age to come. The relief that Israel would rejoice in could not compare with the blessings God would shower upon men in the future. Joel argues from the present to the future and from the lesser to the greater.

## IMMEDIATE REALIZATION

Now  
Rain and Relief  
For Israel  
Physical Deliverance

## FUTURE REALIZATION

Afterwards  
Outpouring of the Spirit  
For All Flesh  
Spiritual Salvation

The vivid description of the wonders to take place in the sky and on the earth before the "*great and terrible day of the Lord*" underscore the drama and importance of this prophecy. The coming day of the Lord would not be as other days, slipping up on men and then slipping by without notice or recognition. This day would be marked by the wonderful events that would signal its arrival: "*blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke...The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood...*"

The wonders in the earth -- blood, fire and smoke -- are common enough sights that men do not usually connect them with "*wonders*" or supernatural harbingers of great events. And yet, the Lord has made use of them in a miraculous way. Every Bible student will recall the history of Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage: the plagues brought upon Egypt included water turning to blood, fire that mingled with hail, and darkness that covered the land. These wonders prepared the way for a new phase or stage in God's plan for redeeming man: the beginning of Israel's national existence as a theocracy under the law. Joel, too, saw that the beginning of a new age -- one of God's spiritual blessings upon all flesh -- would also be marked by supernatural manifestations on earth.

The wonders in the sky -- the sun darkened and the moon turning into blood -- are frequently employed in Scripture to signal or announce great change; these are often catastrophic in nature, and almost always associated with the toppling of nations and empires. Isaiah spoke of the fall of

Babylon as a day when the sun, moon and stars would be darkened and the heavens and earth shaken by the wrath of the Lord (Isa. 13:10). The same language is used by Ezekiel to describe the Lord's punishment upon Egypt (Ezek. 32:7) and Amos to portray the destruction of Israel (Amos 8:9). Jesus spoke of heavenly signs that would predate the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman armies (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24,25; Luke 21:25). A darkened sun and moon accompanied the opening of the sixth and seventh seals in John's vision he received on Patmos (Rev. 6:12; 8:12; 9:2).

Joel makes use of this graphic description three times in his short book (2:10, 31; 3:15). The first has reference to the judgment brought upon Israel in the form of the locust plague and, perhaps, as a type of the destruction that would come from the "*north*" (2:20) and Assyrian forces.<sup>10</sup> The last describes the judgment of God upon all nations; the heathen (wicked) will be cut down but the righteous (Judah) will be blessed.

How is this language to be understood? Are we to interpret blood, fire, smoke, a dim sun and a bloody moon as real phenomena that men would experience, or are they symbolic images that speak of change and awesome consequence? Blood, fire and smoke are generally descriptive of war and destruction, yet these also signify upheaval and momentous change (cf. Exod. 19:16-18). Celestial phenomena has often been employed as a divine step in conjunction with great events; both the birth of Jesus (Matt. 2:1-2, 7) and His crucifixion (Matt. 27:45) were marked by such wonderful evidences. However, there is no record of a literal eclipse of the sun or darkening of the sky in the fall of Babylon (Isa. 13:10), Idumea (Isa. 34:4-5) or, for that matter, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>11</sup> This has prompted some to regard Joel's language as apocalyptic and highly figurative, not to be taken in a literal sense.<sup>12</sup>

Joel looks forward to a "*day of the Lord*" (v. 31). This expression is found five times in his work (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). Each occurrence deals with a judgment of God when punishment is brought upon the ungodly.<sup>13</sup> The first three of these references deal with the locust plague of Joel's

day and the destruction of the wicked. However, verse 32 looks to an age of deliverance and salvation for those who shall "*call on the name of the Lord.*"

## The Prophecy Fulfilled

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The apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, filled with the Spirit of God and speaking by His instruction, quoted Joel's prophecy<sup>14</sup> and declared "*this is that*" (Acts 2:16). Here is a New Testament understanding and interpretation of an Old Testament prophecy. In the last days that our Saviour spent with His disciples He opened their understanding and showed them the meaning of those passages in the Law, Psalms and Prophets that spoke of Him and His kingdom (Luke 24:44-45; Acts 1:3). Peter's "*this is that*" declaration, therefore, was a God-ordained, Jesus-instructed and Spirit-led announcement that Joel's age of deliverance had at long last arrived.

Peter view Joel's prophecy as one of beginning: a new age, a new order, a greater blessing of the Spirit, the realization of the divine plan of the ages. How appropriate for Peter to quote Joel on Pentecost! The work of Jesus in the flesh had been completed, including His death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb. On the afternoon of His crucifixion a great darkness settled upon Jerusalem<sup>15</sup> and the veil of the temple was torn in two, leaving the Holy of Holies naked, open and empty; both literally and metaphorically the light had been turned out on Jerusalem and Judaism, and the sacrifices of the temple no longer found favor in the sight of God. He had ascended to the Father to receive not only glory and honor but also a kingdom, having triumphed over Satan and all his evil might (Gen. 3:15). The Spirit had been sent upon the apostles as Jesus had promised, and the mission that would take the Lord's name to the "*uttermost part of the earth*" was now beginning. On Pentecost, Peter could preach for the first time the resurrection of Jesus by the power of God (Acts 2:22-24). On Pentecost, Peter could preach for the first time that Jesus is reigning on the throne of David in heaven (Acts

2:29-35). On Pentecost, Peter could preach for the first time that Jesus is the Lord and Christ of authority (Acts 2:36,38; cf. Matt. 28:18). On Pentecost, Peter could preach for the first time repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). On Pentecost, Peter could preach for the first time that the promise of God was for all men, *"even as many as the Lord our God shall call"* (Acts 2:39). Before Pentecost these points would have been premature. On Pentecost and ever since, the New Testament of Jesus has been in effect and so preached.

Thus far, students of the Bible -- save those who favor a millennial or dispensational interpretation -- are in full agreement: Joel's prophecy began to be fulfilled on Pentecost. Joel's *"afterward"* is Peter's *"last days"* and signals the beginning of a new age. The outpouring of the Spirit began to be fulfilled on Pentecost when the apostles, as Jesus had promised (Acts 1:4-5), were baptized in the Holy Spirit. The *"all flesh"* of Joel's prophecy was not fully realized when only the twelve apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit; later, however, the Spirit fell upon the Gentile family of Cornelius as He had upon the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 10; 11:15-17). *"All flesh"* is to be understood as a symbolic reference to both Jew and Gentile; all are subjects of God's favor and approval. Pentecost is just the beginning of the blessings and benefit of the Spirit's work in the redemption of man. And, these blessings are withheld from no class, no sex, no race and no station. The establishment of Jesus' church on Pentecost began an era when both Jew and Gentile, men and women, young and old, bond and free were filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:31; 6:4,8; 8:6-7; 19:6; 21:4,8-9) and exercised spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12:7-11). From Pentecost on salvation and deliverance has been granted to those who *"call on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:13).

Pentecost marks the beginning; Joel's prophecy began to be fulfilled on that day when the gospel was first preached in its fulness and the church of our Lord established. But, does Joel look ahead to an ending? Some contend that Joel 2 includes not only Pentecost but the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as well.<sup>16</sup> Franklin Camp flatly asserts that

*"Joel's prophecy of the coming of the Spirit also points to the fall of Jerusalem (Joel 2:30-32)."*<sup>17</sup> This interpretation views Joel as a *"bookend"* prophecy; Pentecost is one bookend and signals the beginning of the fulfillment while the other bookend, the destruction of Jerusalem, is the termination of the prophecy. A few have argued that this forty year period is the age of the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit.

Joel's prophecy of the coming of the Spirit comprehends the beginning and the ending of the miraculous operation of the Spirit. The miraculous age of the Spirit in Joel's prophecy is placed between Pentecost and the fall of Jerusalem. During this period, revelation was completed and confirmed. During this period, the church grew from its infancy to its maturity.<sup>18</sup>

We have no doubt that the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the subject of inspired prophecy, intense concern, and far-reaching implications for the people of God.<sup>19</sup> The great importance of this event can be seen by the attention that Jesus gave to it in His Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). Nevertheless, it is our contention that Joel 2:28-32 does not look to the collapse of Judaism and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in the first century A.D. The Jerusalem destruction is included in Joel's time frame but is not under specific consideration. Indeed, we see in Joel's prophecy the beginning of an age of deliverance that will terminate only in that last, great day of the Lord (Joel 3:14).

Joel 2:28-32 is a panoramic overview of events that will take place in the *"last days."* It is as if the prophet can see far off into the future; on the horizon of time stands a great peak that marks the beginning of God's spiritual blessings upon all flesh. But, just as you and I cannot see the far slope or valleys and plains on the other side of a mountain, so Joel does not see specific first century events beyond Pentecost -- not a Judean famine, not the Neronian persecution, not a Jewish rebellion, and not the destruction of Jerusalem. Joel does see something beyond Pentecost. There is a range that towers above and beyond Pentecost.

There is a range that towers above and beyond Pentecost, the fall of Jerusalem and even the collapse of the Roman Empire: the day of judgment upon all nations and peoples.<sup>20</sup>

In keeping with this general announcement of the Lord's purpose and plan in an age to come, Joel's emphasis is on "*all flesh*." The verses immediately following 2:28-32 clearly demonstrate Joel's broad reference; Joel 3:1 speaks of "*those days*" and introduces the gathering of all nations before God to be judged by Him. It is out of character and inconsistent with the nature of the prophecy to limit it to a narrow, Jewish fulfillment in A.D. 70.

Moreover, the prophecy speaks of a spiritual deliverance. Peter's quotation of Joel 2:32 ("*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*") is explained as a promise of salvation from sin and not rescue from a doomed city some forty years distant. Paul, too, quotes Joel (Rom. 10:13) and connects the promise with those who hear and believe the gospel.

Finally, Joel 2 looks forward to "*the great and terrible day of the Lord*." While the "*day of the Lord*" referred to various judgments and punishments in the writings of the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament emphasis on the "*day of the Lord*" is the day of judgment for all men.

This conclusion is confirmed by the invariable usage of New Testament writers. The apostolic writings afford little ground indeed for the prominence that has been given by commentators to the destruction of Jerusalem, in their interpretations of prophesy. There was another and far different day, in their future, to which they gave the appellation, 'the day of the Lord.' Paul says, 'Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus' (I Cor. 5:5). 'We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus' (II Cor. 1:14). 'Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night' (I Thess. 5:2). 'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night' (II Pet. 3:10). These are all the occurrences of this expression in the New Testament, and they show conclusively that 'the day of the Lord,' with the apostles, was the day of judgment.<sup>21</sup>



Joel 2:28-32 offers a capsule summary of the entire Christian Era. This new age ("*afterward*") will be one of unprecedented blessings and spiritual gifts ("*pour out my spirit*") for both Jew and Gentile alike ("*all flesh*"), without regard for age, sex or social status ("*your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit*"). The wicked will not stand in the day of God's judgment ("*the great and terrible day of the Lord*") but the faithful will be saved ("*whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered*"). Just as the beginning of this age of salvation will be marked by a demonstration of God's power and presence so, too, will its end ("*wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood*").

## Conclusion

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The full character and constitution of the "*last days*" is not given in Joel 2, other than that the new age will be one of spiritual blessings and deliverance for all men. It is necessary for us to examine the New Testament record to understand the nature and terms of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

Peter's sermon on Pentecost announced the open door of salvation to the Jew. Some ten years later the Gentile household of Cornelius was "*granted repentance unto life*" (Acts 11:18). All men today may "*call upon the name of the Lord*" and be saved by believing and obeying the gospel (Rom. 10:13-17).

The prophets of old, Joel included, looked to a "*time accepted*" and "*a day of salvation*" (Isa. 49:8; Psm. 69:13; 118:24). The apostle Paul declared this prophecy fulfilled; "*now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" (II Cor. 6:2).

## Endnotes

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1 Franklin Camp, **The Work of the Holy Spirit In Redemption** (Birmingham, Alabama: Roberts and Son Publication, 1974), p. 44.

2 James D. Bales, **The Hub Of The Bible** (Shreveport, Louisiana: Lambert Book House, 1960).

3 A footnote in the **New Scofield Reference Bible** informs us that *"Peter did not state that Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The details of Joel 2:30-32 (cf Acts 2:19-20) were not realized at that time. Peter quoted Joel's prediction as an illustration of what was taking place in his day, and as a guarantee that God would yet completely fulfill all that Joel had prophesied."*

4 Gleason L. Archer, Jr., **A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), pp. 292-293 and Hobart E. Freeman, **An Introduction To The Old Testament Prophets** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 147-149 gives a general survey of the arguments for an early date. For a recent argument for a late date see William Neil, *"Book of Joel," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:928.

5 Clayton Winters, *"Joel: The Prophet Of Pentecost"* in **Living Lessons From The Prophets** (Knoxville, Tennessee: East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 1985), pp. 263-264.

6 There is some question as to whether Joel predicts a locust plague or if the catastrophe has already begun, if this judgment upon Israel was present or yet future. While it is true that the prophets often spoke of future events in the present and even the past tense, we view Joel 1:2 -- 2:17 as a disaster that occurred in Joel's lifetime. Seeing the waste and ruin caused by the locust, Joel was led by the Spirit to speak of even greater calamities to come and, thankfully, even greater blessings than physical and material salvation.

7 This personified depiction of the army of locusts as soldiers has caused some to interpret the plague as an allegory; Joel is predicting a coming invasion in apocalyptic language. The prophet will, of course, draw spiritual truths from this natural disaster. Still, it is best to accept the locust plague as an actual occurrence. Cf. David Fleer, *"Exegesis of Joel 2:1-11," The Restoration Quarterly* 26: (Third Quarter, 1983), pp. 149-150.

8 R. K. Harrison, **Introduction To The Old Testament** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 875.

9 Calvin observed that the verb *"to pour"* that Joel employed *"does not mean merely to give in drops, but to pour out in great abundance."* John Calvin, quoted in C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, **Commentaries On The Old Testament, Minor Prophets**, Vol. I (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 210.

10 Pusey is convinced that Joel predicted the fall of Israel and the later destruction of Jerusalem by foreign invaders: *"There can really be no question, that by the Northern army, he means the Assyrian"* (E. B. Pusey, **The Minor Prophets: A Commentary**, Vol. I (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1885; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 145).

11 It is interesting to note the peculiar happenings that took place in Jerusalem's last days. Josephus **Wars** 6.5.3; Eusebius **Ecclesiastical History** 3.8.

12 *"The symbolic language...signifies the doom of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state as darkness settled over the nation."* Foy E. Wallace, Jr., **God's Prophetic Word** (Oklahoma City, Okla: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications, 1960), p. 525. Deaver likens the Old Testament references to the sun and moon being darkened to Jesus' language in Matthew 24:29-30 and argues that the phrasing is vivid, emphatic and apocalyptic. Roy Deaver, *"The Olivet Discourse"* in **Studies In Refutation Of Realized Eschatology** (Pensacola, Florida: Bellview Preacher Training School, 1977), p. 9.

13 The *"day of the Lord"* is found some sixteen to twenty-eight times in the Prophets, depending on how the occurrences are counted; *"that day"* and *"a day"* may or may not be a parallel expression (cf. Isaiah 2:20; 24:21; Joel. 2:2). Each reference deals with a great judgment in which the power of God would confound the wicked. For a listing of the prophetic passages that discuss the *"day of the Lord"* see Neale Pryor, *"Eschatological Expectations In Old Testament Prophets"* in **The Last Things** (Austin, Texas: Sweet Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 38-41.

14 Peter does not quote the Hebrew text but follows the Septuagint. *"For 'after this,' Acts has 'in the last days,' an equivalent*

prophetic phrase (Isa. 2:2; Micah 4:1; compare the Septuagint), here substituted as better pointing to the Gospel times; the 'says God' is inserted to point out that this is a divine utterance, as is plain in the Hebrew, but the passage is here taken out of the connection; the clauses relating to the 'young men' and the 'old men' are inverted, probably through inadvertence; the phrase 'and they shall prophesy' is added after the reference to bond-persons, in order to emphasize the honor done the lower class of society; 'above' and 'below' after 'heaven' and 'earth' are rhetorical expansion; 'signs' is inserted as appropriate to the earth, while 'wonders' belong to the heavens; 'Vapor' instead of 'columns' (of smoke) is free rendering, or an error in the Septuagint, in which it several times occurs; 'notable' (after the Septuagint), instead of 'dreadful, terrible,' comes from a wrong understanding of the Hebrew word." Crawford Howell Toy, **Quotations In The New Testament** (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), pp. 97-98.

15 *"The wonders and signs to be revealed in the world of nature, as described in (Acts) vv. 19 and 20, may have more relevance in the present context than is sometimes realized: it was little more than seven weeks since the people in Jerusalem had indeed seen the sun turned into darkness, during the early afternoon of the day of our Lord's crucifixion. And on the same afternoon the paschal full moon may well have appeared blood-red in the sky in consequence of that preternatural gloom."* F. F. Bruce, **Commentary On The Book Of Acts: The New International Commentary On The New Testament** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), p. 69.

16 For a brief review of the arguments for and against this position, see W. T. Hamilton, *"The Day Of The Lord"* of Joel 2, Acts 1, and Other Passages" in **Premillennialism: True or False** (Fort Worth, Texas: Winkler Publications, 1978), pp. 225-226.

17 Franklin Camp, **The Work Of The Holy Spirit**, p. 68. He further argues that *"the quotation of these verses by Christ in Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24, and Luke 21:11 is proof that Joel's prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit also included the fall of Jerusalem"* (p. 68). That Jesus' choice of words is similar to Joel's phrasing we do not doubt. That Jesus quoted Joel 2 and applied the passage to the fall of Jerusalem we must deny.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 58. See also Pat McGee, *"The Living Messages Of Joel," The Living Messages Of The Books Of The Old Testament* (Jonesboro, Arkansas: National Christian Press, Inc., 1977), pp. 332-333.

19 Camp has a good discussion of the significance of the fall of Jerusalem, **The Holy Spirit**, pp. 47-58.

20 Goebel Music, "*The Great Miracle On Pentecost*" in **Studies In Acts** (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1985), p. 74.

21 J. W. McGarvey, **Original Commentary On Acts** (1862: reprint ed., Nashville, Tennessee: The Gospel Advocate Company, n.d.), pp. 31-32.

# ***Divine Judgment Is True Justice***

*Nahum 3:1-10*

**George W. Dehoff**

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## **I. Introduction to Nahum**

1. When written
2. Nahum means "*comfort*"
3. Ethical lessons  
God's moral law undergirds world

## **II. Great City of Nineveh**

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3. Brief history
4. Respite of 300 years after Jonah
5. Destroyed 612 B.C.
6. Kipling "*Recessional*"
7. Thebes destroyed before Nahum wrote

## **III. Characteristic of God**

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1. Nineveh destroyed because of sin
  - A. Weighed in balances
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    - (2) Defenders were drunks
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- (4) God will dig a grave
- (5) God against Nineveh
- (6) Nineveh destroyed 612 B.C.

## V. Our Judgment

1. All will be judged (Heb. 9:27)
2. After second coming of Christ
3. Judged according to deeds done in body
4. Judged by the gospel
5. Righteous rewarded
6. Wicked punished

## Introduction

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I am to speak on the Old Testament prophet Nahum. This little known book of the Bible is very important. It shows that even the greatest and most powerful city in the world is under God and without repentance will be punished. It shows us that the history of the whole world is under God. *"He holds the world in His hand."* It tells us that the mills of God grind small -- *"every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense"* -- and that they may grind slowly -- God gives time for repentance -- but they grind surely. *"Divine Judgment Is True Justice."*

Nahum wrote before the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C. He referred to the plunder of the great Egyptian city of Thebes (No-Amon), capital city of Upper Egypt (Nahum 3:8) which was accomplished by Ashurbanipal of Assyria in 663 B.C.

This book was written, therefore, between 663 and 612 B.C. apparently not long after Josiah's revival of 621 B.C. The people of Judah had repented of their sins, they had brought out the old book and were celebrating their *"solemn feasts."*

This book is written to assure them that those who have refused to repent will perish. The name *"Nahum"* means *"comfort"* or consolation (of God) and the prophet's primary message was the impending doom of Nineveh and

the consequent fall of the Assyrian tyrant. This message would bring immediate and great relief to Judah which had been so long oppressed.

For decades Judah had lived under the shadow of the Assyrian scourge and the nightmare of Assyrian cruelty and butchery for which "*the giant among the Semites*" was infamous. The name of the prophet was appropriate to his message.

Judah had turned back to the Lord temporarily so the one dominant theme of this book is "*Nineveh must be destroyed.*"

Nahum did not merely give a message that Nineveh will be destroyed but he taught great ethical lessons that the character of God makes him "*slow to anger*" (Nahum 1:3) and "*a stronghold*" to them who "*trust in him*" (Nahum 1:7). He taught that God will not at all "*aquit the wicked*" (Nahum 1:3). This was the great truth which God's people needed at that time.

This book illustrates that truth from history showing that the apparent prosperity and power of the grossly wicked is no reflection on God. In His own time, God will see that all things work out as they should. This book is a great literary production but in this lesson we are not interested in the literary and poetic production but in its message that Jehovah is the God of all history, the God of the whole world. God's moral law undergirds the whole world. When the nation exalts itself above measure God moves into action. "*Behold I am against you saith the Lord of Hosts*" (Nahum 2:13; 3:5).

## Great City of Nineveh

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Nineveh was one of the most ancient cities of the world. It was founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:11-12) a great grandson of Noah. It was finally destroyed in 612 B. C. Nineveh was on the banks of the great Tigris River above the place where the greater Zab, one of its chief tributaries and was just opposite the present city of Nomsul in Iraq. For thirty years it was the capital of the great Assyrian empire and its fortunes ebbed and flowed with the long strife



between Assyria and Babylonia. Babylonia was considered the more cultured and Nineveh the more warlike. Its kings all lived north of Babylon. Babylon was more important from Abraham to David but following David's time Nineveh was the greater city especially during the time of Hezekiah and Manasseh. From the time of King Josiah and the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk and Daniel, Babylon was again more prominent.

Some of the great rulers of Nineveh were Tiglath-Pileser who made conquests about 1100 B. C. and Ashurnasirpal and Shalmaneser III who inaugurated a system of conquest and ruthless deportation of whole populations. He greatly increased the power and influence of Nineveh. This latter king (sometimes numbered III instead of II) defeated Hazael of Syria and boasted of receiving tribute from Jehu of Israel. The Assyrians, instead of numbering their years, named them for certain rulers. About the eighth century B.C., no doubt due to the weakness of her kings, Assyria skipped fifty-one years of her own history. It was during this time that Jonah was sent from the Lord to warn the people of Nineveh. *"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown"* (Jonah 3:4).

Nineveh repented and God gave her a respite of nearly 200 years. Esar-daddon the great king of Assyria conquered lands as far away as Egypt (Isa. 19:4) and north Arabia. He was succeeded by his greater son, Ashur-banipal who presided over Assyria during its brief climax of power and culture. Nebopolassar, of Babylon who reigned from 625 to 605, freed it from Assyria and helped bring about the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C.

About 623 B.C. Cyaxares, king of the Medes made his first attack on Nineveh and this was probably about the time Nahum wrote that the city would be destroyed.

Greatness and power mean nothing unless men recognize God -- the God of History, the God of the Bible. In 1897 the British empire was at the height of its power. She literally ruled the world. It was the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. The obvious man was chosen to write a poem of celebration. Rudyard Kipling, the great poet of the imperial mood and the *"Nahum of the empire"* wrote a poem

that baffled and angered many of his countrymen. After the days of futility, in desperation, he wrote "*Recessional*".

God of our fathers, known of old--  
Lord of our far-flung battle line--  
Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine--  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget--lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies--  
The Captains and the Kings depart--  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart,  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget--lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away--  
On dune and headland sinks the fire--  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget--lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of, power, we lose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe--  
Such boasting as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the Law--  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget--lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard--  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,  
For frantic boast and foolish word,  
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord! Amen!

All the greatness of the world is nothing, unless we remember God. Kipling was not proud but humble. He recognized that God used history for His purpose, not ours. In the light of that revelation it behooves man to learn the purpose of God and what He wants us to do. The book of Nahum is, therefore, not a little book hidden away in the Old Testament with no message for today. It gives the whole

philosophy of human history in the plan of God.

Nahum did not merely warn the people about what was going to happen. He gave them an example which they all knew about. Fifty years before the mighty city of Thebes, capital of Upper Egypt had been destroyed.

Thebes is 500 miles inland from the northern shore of Egypt. It is 451 miles south from Memphis, Egypt. I have gone there many times by plane and in 1950 by train through the desert. From the present city of Luxor one goes by boat across the mile wide Nile to the "*Valley of the Kings.*" There not only rests the body of King Tutankamen (still in his original tomb through his treasures have been removed after being discovered by Carter in 1922) but also all the tombs of other great men and women. There is the great temple built by Queen Hatsepsut, believed by many to be the Pharoah's daughter who cared for Moses. Statues of their false gods still stand in the valley. Only the ruins are left.

From the Palace Hotel, on the banks of the Nile, one goes by carriage to the old city of Thebes. The most magnificent ruins on earth are there. Temples, statues and signs of former greatness. All have been destroyed. Nahum used this city as an example of how greatness and false gods cannot save. The people of Nineveh knew about the destruction of Thebes -- their kind had led them in the battle -- but they still paid no heed to Nahum's example. Like evil people in every generation, they thought they were the exception to the rule. "*Others will be judged, not us. Others will fall, but not us.*" Nahum sought to show that all stand under judgment. There is a Biblical philosophy even in the history of the whole of mankind.

## Characteristics Of God

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The book of Nahum, in telling what was going to happen to Nineveh, gives a list of characteristics of God:

God is of great might. This can be seen by revelation and by nature (Nahum 1:3-6). God created and sustains the world (Job 38-39; Psm. 93; 97; 104; 139).

God will pursue His enemies into darkness. They cannot hide from Him.

God is slow to anger. He gave Nineveh two hundred years after Jonah preached to her. No doubt He would have let the city stand if she had repented when Nahum warned her.

God is a stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows and blesses those who serve him.

God will bring all to judgment. It will be God's judgment and not man's.

## Judgment

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The judgment bringing God's wrath on Nineveh was caused by their sins. Nahum lists the bloody city (3:1) as being full of lies (3:4) and unceasing evil (3:19).

Nineveh is weighed in the balances and found wanting.

(1) Condemned to utter destruction (Nah. 1:8-9).

(2) Captured while defenders were drunk (Nah. 1:10).

(3) Name blotted out (Nah. 1:14).

(4) God to dig a grave (Nah. 1:14).

This is a solemn picture of God's judgment upon wickedness.

Nineveh is pictured as being full of harlotry, witchcraft and dishonesty. Woe is pronounced on the city (3:1-4).

God said, "*I am against you*" (3:5). All of us have some people against us. That usually makes no difference, but when God is against us, we are without hope.

Nineveh was destroyed by Babylon in 612 B.C. (some give this date as 636). Her own sins and refusal to repent caused her destruction.

## Judgment For Us

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The principles of truth taught in Nahum are eternal. They apply to all mankind -- to us.

We will all be judged after death (Heb. 9:27). God has appointed a day in which He will judge us (Acts 17:31). This will be after the second coming of Christ.

We will be judged according to righteousness (Acts

10:34-35), and according to our deeds done in the body (John 3:19-21; I Cor. 15:58; II Tim. 4:14; Rev. 20:12-13). We will be judged by the gospel (Rom. 2:16). The righteous and the wicked will be separated (Matt. 25:32, 34, 41). The righteous will be rewarded (II Tim. 4:8; Rev. 11:18; I Cor. 3:8) and the wicked will suffer everlasting punishment (II Thess. 1:6-10). The saints will rejoice forever in the celestial city which our Lord has gone to prepare.

# *A Watchman Of Israel*

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.



And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus said the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed by their looks, though they be a rebellious house (Ezekiel 2:1-6).

And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again,

when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous man sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezekiel 3:16-21).

One of the most astonishing things about ancient Israel -- and even about the churches of Christ, which are *spiritual* Israel today -- is how quickly God's people were prone to disobey God without "*watchmen*" being constantly on guard to give them warning. Take, for example, what happened when Moses went up the mountain at Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. He was gone but some days -- and yet by the time he got back the people had prevailed upon Aaron to "*make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wat not what is become of him*" (Exod. 32:1). Instead of withstanding these rebellious people, even Moses' own brother Aaron said unto the people, "*Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me.*" Verse 3 tells us that the people did that and brought the golden earrings to Aaron, who, in turn, according to verse 4, fashioned all this gold with a graving tool into a molten calf, and the people said, "*These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt...*"

Having witnessed all the power of the only true and living God that had been demonstrated both while in Egypt and after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage -- and especially Aaron -- one should have thought such behavior would be nigh on to impossible. And yet, when Moses came down from the mountain, and saw the calf and the dancing, this confirmed what God had said to Moses in the mount that the people had "*corrupted themselves.*" Verse 19 tells us that "*Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his*

*hands, and brake them beneath the mount."* And verse 20 goes on to say, *"And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it."*

Moses just could not understand the actions of his brother Aaron. *"What did this people unto thee,"* he asked him, *"that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?"* Instead of acknowledging his part in all this, he tried to let the people take all the blame, saying,

...Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot: thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. (Exod. 32:22-24).

From that time forward it appeared that the people could never be trusted to be faithful to God without *"watchmen"* continually giving them *"warning."* Such watchmen were Joshua and Caleb. Just before his death, Joshua called for all the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers (Josh. 24). He reminded them that beforetime their fathers had served other gods. However, the Lord said, through Joshua, that he had led their father Abraham throughout all the land of Canaan, had multiplied his seed, and had blessed his descendants. *"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord."* Joshua said that they could *"choose ye this day whom ye will serve....but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Josh. 24:15).

With this kind of strong leadership, it was easy for the people to answer, *"...therefore will we also serve the Lord: for he is our God"* (v. 18). Whereupon, Joshua warned them, *"If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good."* And the people said unto Joshua,



*"Nay, but we will serve the Lord."* So Joshua commanded them, saying, *"Now therefore put away....the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel."* And the people said unto Joshua, *"The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey"* (See verses 21-24).

Because Joshua had given them such strong, stern warning, we read from verse 31 that *"...Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel."* However, as we continue reading on over into the book of Judges, we read in Judges 2:10, *"...and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel,"* so verse 11 and following relates that *"the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, and of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroath. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel and he delivered them into the hands of the spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies."*

From verse 16 we read that *"Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them."* However, they would not listen unto their judges, but went *"a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their father walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so."*

All through the book of Judges, we see that when the people would listen to the watchful judges, God would draw nigh unto them; however, when they refused warning, he would withdraw from them, leaving them to the servitude of their enemies. Yet, when in their distress they would decide to listen to warning, and repent, God once again would draw nigh unto them and do them good.

One thing which seems to escape the attention of many is that it was God who authorized "watchmen" -- not something that one did of his own will. For instance, in Isaiah 62:6-7 we read, *"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."* Later in this same book, in Isaiah 21:11-12, we read, *"The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come."*

That "watchmen" were according to God's will, not contrary to it, is evident. As such, they had certain responsibilities. In Ezekiel 33:1-9, we have these words:

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of the people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of

his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Both in the above passage as well as in Ezekiel 3:17-21, referred to earlier, we see the necessity of being faithful to one's responsibilities as a watchman. Some watchmen would be faithful -- and be blessed; other watchmen would be faithless to their trust and lose their souls for it. Not all watchmen are equal to their task. For instance, in Isaiah's day, he lamented,

His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter (Isa. 56:10-11).

One thing is for certain, all the watching anyone could do would be of no value at all, unless the Lord was in it. As Psalms 127:1 put it, *"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."*

As important as watchmen were in the days of fleshly Israel, certainly they are no less so among the churches of Christ, which are spiritual Israel. Jesus said,

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matt. 24:42-44).

Likewise, in the following chapter, verse 13, he said, *"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."*

In Mark 14:38, we are told to *"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."* Along this same line, Jesus said,

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole

earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (Luke 21:34-36).

As much as the Scriptures have to say about watching, it is astonishing how many supposed-to-be gospel preachers and elders inveigh against it. Just let almost anyone bring an error (whether major or minor seemingly makes no difference) to the attention of the brotherhood and cries are heard from every side against "*brotherhood watchdogs*" and "*keepers of the orthodoxy!*" Yet, when the apostle Paul called the Ephesian elders to meet with him at Miletus, let us note what he told them, in Acts 20:28-31:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. And of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

In I Corinthians 16:13, we are enjoined, "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*" Likewise, in Ephesians 6:18, after having exhorted us to "*put on the whole armor of God*" (verses 10 through 17), Paul continues, "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints...*" And the writer of Hebrews commanded us to "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*" (Heb. 13:17).

Because our brethren in the early days of Christianity either failed to watch properly or refused warning, within less than 100 years apostasy was well on its way -- and by the 4th or 5th centuries great numbers of those ancient "*churches of Christ*" had drifted into "*catholicism*" later called Roman. Truly, by the 11th century, efforts were made

to make Roman Catholicism more "*orthodox*" -- but they succeeded only in bringing three new "*Orthodox*" churches into being -- the Greek, Russian and Armenian. The so-called "*Protestant Reformatory Movement*" of the 14th and 15th centuries and onward did no better, only bringing still more man-made churches into being, such as the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Church of England, Dutch Reformed, Baptist, Methodist and such like.

When the so-called "*Restoration Movement*" got underway at the end of the 18th century, it appeared for a time that massive numbers of supposed-to-be Christians at last had learned their lesson. Within less than 50 years, more than 500,000 had walked out of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, taking their stand for plain, simple, unadulterated Christianity firmly based on the "*old Jerusalem gospel*" as set forth in the New Testament.

When some of these latter brethren started abandoning a "*thus saith the Lord*" espousing "*missionary societies*" within that first half-century, truly there were "*watchmen on the wall*" who raised the alarm. But large numbers within the Restoration Movement refused to be warned, exchanging God's missionary society, the church, for humanly-authorized societies of their own invention. And when, a little later, still other brethren started bringing in the use of mechanical instruments of music into the worship, these same types of brethren ridiculed the idea that there was anything wrong. They refused to listen to the "*watchmen on the wall.*" Thus it was that within less than 100 years after the Restoration Movement got under way, in 1793, with James O'Kelly, in the Carolinas, by the 1880's the churches were splitting like pop-corn over missionary societies and instrumental music -- brotherhood-wide! You just can't warn some brethren simply because they refuse to be warned.

When the false doctrine of Premillennialism arose to plague the churches in the 1920's and the 30's, "*watchmen on the wall,*" such as Foy E. Wallace, Jr., N. B. Hardeman and others, sounded out a clear warning -- and, for once, most of the brotherhood took heed. However, when the "*Anti-Cooperation Movement*" arose in the mid-'40's and onward, many of these same brethren could not or would

not be warned; all the "*watching*" in the world, as far as they were concerned, was to no avail. As a result we lost approximately 10% of the churches into a separate body out of step and out of fellowship with those who refused to bind where the Lord had not bound. By the late '50s and early '60s, yet another "*movement*" called "*Liberalism*" began to arise, seeking to "*loose*" what the Lord had bound. (See Matthew 16:19 -- also 18:18). Various "*watchmen*" sounded out the alarm -- but elders and preachers alike, for the most part, refused warning. The result was that Liberalism had a "*field day*" among the churches of Christ, with possibly as many as 80 to 90 per cent now having gone that way.

When something called "*Campus Evangelism*" arose in the late '60s, at first it looked promising. However, within less than a year it was evident that those in charge of it were using it to undermine the restoration principle, particularly among the young. Drastic action against this perverse movement resulted in its demise within some four years time. However, then, one Chuck Lucas was able to take over this entire apparatus in something he called "*Campus Advance*," resulting in the rise of "*Crossroadism*," based on heretical ideas that he had generated at the Crossroads church of Christ, in Gainesville, Florida. Once again naive brethren refused to be warned -- and before that movement had run its course close to 200 congregations had suffered "*divisions and offenses*" over it. Within the past seven years, the center of that movement has shifted from Crossroads/Gainesville, Florida, to Boston, Massachusetts, which, even now, is in the process of changing its direction somewhat into a so-called "*House Church*" Movement -- and, instead of listening to the warnings of Israel's watchmen, great numbers of brethren are making pilgrimages to Boston to be indoctrinated in this new movement by Kip McKean, one of Lucas's disciples, and those associated with him there.

And just within the last five years, from about 1981 onward, strangely enough, we are hearing of yet two more perverse movements seeking to draw away the disciples after them. No matter how many watchmen sound out warnings, numbers of churches seem determined to follow Rubel Shelly and those he influences away from non-

denominationalism into inter-denominationalism, affecting to see faithful Christians to be fellowshipped in all churches. And almost at the same time, a second movement has arisen seeking to force fellowship between churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Church without the Christian Church making the necessary changes whereby genuine fellowship might even be possible.

One of the most frustrating realities to accompany these movements within recent years is that some of the "*watchmen*" who formerly warned the brethren have abandoned their warnings and gone over to the side of error. Take Reuel Lemmons as just one example in point. If you will read the volumes of the Firm Foundation immediately prior to the early '60s, you will see him calling many pertinent dangers to the attention of the brotherhood. However, when Don Finto and others associated with Campus Evangelism started going into error, instead of pointing out their error, Lemmons pointed to the large numbers following them away from the truth, saying, "*They must be doing something right.*" When Pepperdine College almost completely abandoned the restoration movement, instead of being a true "*watchman*" and giving warning, Lemmons let himself be appointed to their Board of Trustees, and defended them *in their error* on every hand. He still does. When Pat Boone followed Oral Roberts and others into Pentecostalism -- even seeking to make up a plane-load of "*our*" young people to go do "*personal work*" in Brazil for the Assemblies of God! -- who defended him editorially and refused to give warning? You guessed it -- Reuel Lemmons. When Chuck Lucas took over the Campus Evangelism apparatus and started leading away the disciples into still another false doctrine -- Crossroadism -- there was old Reuel, bidding them God speed, pointing to their large numbers, heedless of their false teaching, saying once again, "*They must be doing something right!*" When, after dividing the church at Charleston, Illinois, over Crossroadism, Kip McKean moved on to Boston and led almost that whole area of churches into that false movement, once again there was Reuel saying, "*They must be doing something right!*" And now that Alan Cloyd, Marvin Phillips, Rubel Shelly, and

others are seeking to force churches of Christ into fellowship with the Independent Christian Church, whom did they fly back from Europe to put his "*imprimatur*" on their false movement? Reuel Lemmons.

Truly, brother Lemmons is but one of the former "*watchmen*" who no longer warn of but have embraced error. Such false brethren need to read once again the watchman's duty as set forth in Ezekiel 33:1-9, discussed earlier. Pay attention especially to verse 6, as follows:

But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

No doubt it was this and similar passages that the apostle Paul had in mind, when he wrote in Acts 20, "*I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you...Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*" It was then that he charged the Ephesian elders to "*take heed*" both unto themselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. It was then that he warned them of "*grievous wolves*" entering in, "*not sparing the flock. And of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*" And it was then that he enjoined upon those same Ephesian elders, "*Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*"

Brethren, if we are to learn anything at all from this lesson, we must come to understand that "*watchmen*" in Israel who faithfully "*warn*" the brethren just as Paul warned these Ephesian elders, are not our enemies but are preachers and lovers of the truth. As Jesus said, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).



# *The Rise Of False Prophets In The Church And Their Basis Of Appeal*

Dan Jenkins

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False teachers are as old as the history of man. From the very beginning of mankind, Satan recognized that the best way to separate the creation from the Creator was to convince him that truth did not matter. The message of the first false teacher was, "*Ye shall not surely die*" (Gen. 3:4). Beginning at this point the tactics used by the "*father of lies*" (John 8:44) differs little from our first introduction to him.

## **False Teacher During Mosaic Age**

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Whenever the written law was given at Mt. Sinai the record shows there was a continual presence of those who perverted the teachings of God. While Moses was still on the mountain, false prophets were at work at its base saying, "*Make us gods, which shall go before us...*" (Exod. 32:1). Later when the priesthood of Aaron was set in place Korah, Dathan, and Abiram stood ready to deny the truth of God's orderly arrangement.

Jeroboam is an excellent example of false teachers in the Old Testament. When the kingdom of Israel divided following the death of Solomon, Jeroboam became the leader of the new religion that began. He was a false teacher. Note the following about this religion and see if it doesn't parallel false teaching today.

(1) It was one that has its origin in the heart of man and not in the heart of God. "*And Jeroboam said in his heart,*

*Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David..."* (I Kings 12:26). The doctrine of false teachers comes from the hearts of men, never from the heart of God.

(2) It was one that catered to the convenience of men's lives. The words of Jeroboam to his subjects were, *"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem..."* (I Kings 12:28). So much of false teaching comes from an attempt to bring God down to the level of men instead of trying to lift men to the image of God. One appeal of false teachers is to the *"idol of convenience."*

(3) It was very similar to the true religion. Jeroboam's religion had priests and feasts like those of the true religion in Jerusalem. *"And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar"* (I Kings 12:32). The closer false teaching can be to truth, the more likely it is to be accepted. Faithful Christians must never lose sight of this fact.

## False Teachers During Life Of Jesus

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It should not be surprising that when our Savior came to this earth there were false teachers present. When the forerunner of Jesus encountered the Jewish attitude that they were God's chosen people because they had the blood of Abraham coursing in their veins, he informed them, *"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"* (Luke 3:8). Jesus' rebuke to this false attitude and teaching was, *"...If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham"* (John 8:39).

This same spirit is found in their attitude toward the temple being only for the use of Jews. When Solomon had dedicated the temple he showed God's attitude toward this holy place.

Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in this

house; then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name" (II Chron. 6:32).

Isaiah himself echoed this understanding when he said of the temple, "...*their burnt offerings and their sacrifices, shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people*" (Isa. 56:7). Finally Jesus rebuked this false teaching regarding the temple being only for the Jews when He cleansed the temple. "*Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves*" (Mark 11:17).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus rebuked false teaching of His day. In those sections which begin with "*Ye have heard...*" and conclude with, "*But I say unto you...*" It is amazing how many today assume that the Old Testament actually taught all of the things that follow the "*Ye have heard*" phrases. The Old Testament never taught that every one had the right to put away his wife simply with a writing of divorcement or that men should hate their enemy (See Matt. 5:31, 43). The contrast of Jesus was not just between the authority of Jesus and that of Moses -- it was a contrast between the authority of Jesus and that of Moses or a perversion of Moses' teaching.

Jesus dealt more specifically with another false teaching of the religious leaders of his day. In Matthew 19 the Jews affirmed their belief that one could put away his wife for every cause claiming such was based on what Moses said. However the Old Testament teaching indicated that the one reason why divorce was allowed under that law was because a husband found in his wife "*some uncleanness*." The marginal reading that explains this Hebrew expression is, "*A matter of nakedness*" (Deut. 24:1, cf. margin). True enough some took this to be a permission of divorce for every cause under the Old Testament law (and many today have wrongly assumed that this is what Moses taught), but such was simply not the case! When one reads the words of Jesus he can plainly see that divorce for every cause is foreign to the teaching of Jesus in our age (Matt. 19:9).

The strongest confrontation Jesus had with false teachers of His day was over those whose religion was characterized by a formal, external righteousness. When they converted Gentiles to following the God of heaven, Jesus said that their influence made *"him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves"* (Matt. 23:15). While they were concerned about tithing, they ignored judgment, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). They would not defile themselves by entering the court of Pilate, but would joyfully stand without and shout, *"Crucify him, crucify him."*

### **False Prophets Foretold By Jesus**

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Jesus foretold that there would be false teachers to attempt to destroy the church. In the Sermon on the Mount He said, *"Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"* (Matt. 7:15). In the Sermon on the Plain He said, *"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets"* (Luke 6:26). One of the signs Jesus gave that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem would be the presence of false teachers. *"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many...For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"* (Matt. 24:11,24).

### **Judaizing Teachers In The Early Church**

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In view of the fact that throughout history Satan has worked through false prophets, we should not be surprised that once the church began Satan would again use this method to destroy the church. In the early chapters of Acts false teachers were not a problem. The church began with the disciples continuing *"stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine..."* (Acts 2:42). At first there was little opposition from the Jews, and when it began their only method to oppose it was persecution. However, soon another avenue of attack was opened and almost every congregation was

faced with Judaizing teachers.

When Cornelius became a Christian Peter's actions were opposed by men with wrong concepts of what Christianity was all about. It is significant that Peter was not rebuked for baptizing a Gentile, but for eating with one (Acts 11:3)! This opposition came from those described as, *"...they that were of the circumcision."* This is the first evidence of the presence of Judaizing teachers.

After Paul had completed his first missionary journey the opposition from this same source surfaced again. After he and Barnabas had returned to Antioch, false teachers from Judea came to that city and attempted to bind circumcision on the Gentile Christians. Paul and Barnabas confronted them and the Bible describes this as *"no small dissension and disputation"* (Acts 15:2). When they arrived at Jerusalem the church came together where again there was great conflict. *"But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses"* (Acts 15:5). Note Paul's description of these false teachers. *"...False brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage..."* (Gal. 2:4). Paul's response to them is seen when he said, *"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"* (Gal. 2:5). Luke records this meeting thusly, *"And when there had been much disputing..."* (Acts 15:7). It would be hard for us to fully understand just how heated this discussion was. However one might think that the letter that came from this meeting would settle the matter forever. Such was not the case!

Paul, having established the church in Galatia on his first journey soon found that following his departure these Judaizing teachers had sought to destroy his work. This prompted the writing of the Galatian letter which contains this description of false teachers. *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you..."* (3:1). They *"...desire to make a fair show in the flesh...lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ"* (6:12). Paul's response to those who perverted the gospel of Christ was to say, *"...let him be accursed"* (1:8,9).

A study of the rest of the letters written to churches and individuals in that first century will show just how widespread the influence of these Judaizing teachers was. The argument used by Paul in the Roman letter regarding men becoming dead to the law to be married to Christ is evidence of the problem in Rome (Rom. 7:4). The church at Corinth was plagued by these false teachers. Paul affirmed, *"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God"* (I Cor. 7:19). One cannot ignore the fact that the denial of the resurrection which Paul addresses in I Corinthians 15 was one of the cardinal doctrines of the Sadducees. The second letter to Corinth finds Judaizing teachers still at work. Paul's extended defense of his apostleship stands in marked contrast to those who claimed to be Hebrews, Israelites, and the seed of Abraham (II Cor. 11:22). Paul affirms that they were *"false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ"* (II Cor. 11:13). That Judaizing teachers plagued the church at Ephesus cannot be overlooked. Though they were predominately a Gentile church Paul made sure they understood fully that Christ had abolished in the flesh that law of commandments contained in ordinances, and that reconciliation to God came via the one body (Eph. 2:15,16). He affirmed that the mystery was, *"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promises in Christ by the gospel..."* (Eph. 3:6).

As we continue to see the presence of Judaizing teachers in the early church we turn to the Philippian letter. Paul warns of these teachers by saying, *"Beware of dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision"* (Phil. 3:3). Their presence provoked Paul to boast of his fleshly attainment -- *"Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"* (Phil. 3:5,6) -- but such brought an immediate evaluation of such as dung (v. 8). Colossae was more isolated geographically than other churches, but such did not keep these false teachers from affecting it. Paul negates their influence by

saying, *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days..."* (Col. 2:16). Christ had blotted out the handwriting of ordinances by nailing it to His cross (2:14).

As we continue our journey through the letters of the New Testament, we pass over Thessalonians (we shall look at them later when we notice the spirit of false teachers) and turn next to the letters written to Timothy and Titus. Judaizing teachers are discussed when Paul speaks of those who instead of teaching sound doctrine, have turned to *"fables and endless genealogies"* (I Tim. 1:3,4). They were desirous of being teachers of the law, but did so without understanding (I Tim. 1:7). By the time Paul wrote the second letter to the younger preacher these false teachers were present denying the reality of the resurrection (II Tim. 2:17,18), and Paul speaks of further departures (II Tim. 4:2-4). Titus is warned of those whose mouth must be stopped by faithful elders and describes them as being *"especially they of the circumcision"* (Tit. 1:10,11). He too is warned of the dangers of *"genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law..."* (Tit. 3:9).

Even a casual study of the Hebrew letter will show the presence of Judaizing teachers ready to draw away the faithful back to the old, inferior system. The author's magnificent discourse extolling the supremacy of the priesthood of Melchisedec above the Levitical system is well known by Bible students.

## Other False Teachers In The New Testament

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We could continue through the New Testament books, looking at the presence of Judaizing teachers in almost every one of them. We also could spend time noticing those false teachers which came from the Gentiles who entered the kingdom of God. However, a more profitable approach might be to use the example of these teachers to study the methods used by false teachers and then conclude our study by looking at how an ungodly spirit can also cause a man who has the truth to be a false teacher by this very attitude.

## Methods Used By False Prophets

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The first method we note that was used by the Judaizing teachers of the first century, and by those of our own day, is a denial of the authority of the Bible. The first false teacher began the first false "*sermon*" with these words, "*Hath God said*" (Gen. 3:1)? Think of how often the apostle Paul was forced to defend his apostleship. Whenever a messenger of Satan can undermine the authority of the Bible he destroys God's only chosen method to reach the lost. Paul could have written thousands of epistles to New Testament churches, but each of them would have been without force if Paul's claim of being an apostle was meaningless. No wonder the false teachers claimed to be apostles (II Cor. 11:13)! No wonder the church at Ephesus was commended for trying those who wrongfully claimed to be apostles (Rev. 2:2)! This was the heart of the matter. If the words of the apostles are not bound in heaven (cf. Matt. 16:19) man is without guide and is ready prey to every false teacher.

A second method used by these false teachers, which is closely related to the first, is that of giving the words of men equal recognition with those of God. When the false teachers of Acts 15 came to Antioch, they expected their teachings to be fully as accepted as those of the apostles. The modern equivalent is found in the style of preaching that decries the use of "*proof-text preaching*," and results in sermons full of human ideas. When the Judaizing teachers were confronted by Paul, he gave no quarter to them. Hear his words, "*To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you*" (Gal. 2:5). Faced with such opposition their only recourse was to make it appear that their words were just as authoritative as that of the apostles. If this demanded claiming to be apostles, such they did. If this demanded simply assertion, they were ready.

One aspect of these false teachers that must be remembered is the way they used deception. Paul say they "*...came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 2:4). This use of deception is why Jesus



described the coming false teachers as wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). The metaphor used by Paul is that of spies and traitors who introduce themselves by stealth into the camp of an enemy. Never has there been a false prophet who said, *"Don't listen to me, I will lead you astray."* We are foolish to think that any dishonest false teacher would hesitate at all to lie about his actions. One who willingly disregards the teachings of Jesus in one area will have no problem in disregarding what it teaches about truth and honesty.

## Wrong Attitudes Of False Teachers

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Our discussion of false teachers would not be complete until we look at the contrast between the false teachers and faithful teachers as described in I Thessalonians 2. Consider the following chart. In one list we have shown the words used by Paul in describing false teachers. In the other we have shown those used to describe faithful teachers. In each list the verse denoting such is found in parenthesis.

### False Teachers

Deceit (3)  
 Uncleanliness (3)  
 Guile (3)  
 Pleasing men (4)  
 Flattering words (5)  
 Cloak of covetousness (5)  
 Sought glory of men (6)

### Faithful Teachers

Bold (2)  
 Spoke the gospel of God (2)  
 Trusted with the gospel (4)  
 Pleasing to God (4)  
 Gentle like a nurse (7)  
 Affectionately desirous of the lost (8)  
 Would have given own souls to save others (8)  
 Labored night and day (9)  
 Did not preach for money (9)  
 Holy, just, unblameable behavior (10)  
 Exhorted (11)  
 Comforted (11)  
 Charged (11)  
 As a father to his children (12)

## Conclusion

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Far more could be said, but perhaps this will give us an understanding of the progression of false teachers and the methods and attitudes that characterized them in the early church. To understand all that we can about them is to allow us to understand false teachers in the church today. May God help us to recognize them and give us the wisdom to know how to deal with them. Only in this way can we be assured of the purity of the church throughout the ages.

# *Jehovah's Messenger (Christ)*

Charles Blair

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The following conditions existed in Israel over 100 years after their return from Babylon. The priest despised the name of God by offering polluted bread upon the altar. They regarded serving at the Lord's table as being contemptible. The sacrifices which were offered were blind, lame and sick. They regarded worship as weariness to the body. The law was not being taught as it should and as a result many were stumbling at the law. There was divorce among God's people in order to allow them to marry women that were not of Israel.

The people by their conduct had wearied the Lord. The question is raised as to how did the people weary the Lord. The answer is given in chapter 2:17:

...when ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, where is the God of judgment?

Those who were doing wrong must have been alright because there was no judgment from God on them. This was the sentiment of the people as a whole. This kind of reasoning had to be dealt with by God. So the prophet Malachi comes on the scene to point out their sins and answer their question raised by their lives.

The answer is that God would send a messenger. The arrival of this messenger on the scene would forever settle the issue of "*right and wrong*." This is indeed a grand prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. The messenger which all men must listen to in order to be saved.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things... (Heb. 1:1-2).

Before this messenger would come, there would be one who would come in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5).

It is the one who is coming in the spirit of Elijah that is spoken of in Malachi 3:1:

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me...

Jesus reveals to us, it was John the Baptist who was this messenger.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist (Matt. 17:11-13).

John came to "*restore all things*." Bear in mind the deplorable conditions that existed in Malachi's day. When John came, it was not with the invitations of preaching the same old tired messages of the priest that had caused so many to stumble. We read in Matthew 3:2:

And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The effects of his preaching was that many came from Jerusalem and all Judea to be baptized of him. Prior to their being baptized, they were "*confessing their sins*." John's preaching therefore convinced them of sin and called for them to make a response. By focusing attention to their lives, he was preparing the way for the messenger of God as prophesied in Malachi, chapter 3. It should be of great interest to us how the preaching of Jesus is described in Matthew 4:17.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Truly the way was prepared by John for the Lord.

Let us now look at the text in Malachi 3 and look at some particular facts concerning this "*Messenger*" who would come. These are things which must identify Jesus as the Messiah.

First of all note that concerning the Lord, the people would be "*seeking him*." They trusted in the promises of God. Hence at a certain time, the Messiah was to come. The people would be looking for this Messiah according to certain time elements established by prophecy.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall not be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms. (Dan. 2:44).

The words "*days of these kings*" has reference to the fourth world power from Babylon as per the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. The Jews could count. Rome was the fourth world power.

When the wise men came to Jerusalem and met with Herod; they wanted to know, "*...where is he that is born King of the Jews?...*"

In the fourth verse of chapter 2 of Matthew, Herod inquires of the chief priests and scribes, where was Christ to be born? Does it not strike you as odd that not one of the scribes or chief priest said, "*It is not time for the Messiah?*"

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law (Gal. 4:4).

Jesus describes certain events that will precede the fall of Jerusalem, as recorded in Matthew 24. Now note verse 5 of this chapter:

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

How could anyone in the first century make a claim of being the Christ, unless the people understood the time was right for the Messiah? Hence the people were looking for the Messiah when Jesus Christ came and began His preaching.

Observe what the woman at the well thought in regard to her life time.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things (John 4:25).

She clearly expected this event to happen soon.

The next thing we will consider is, the messenger would "*...suddenly come to his temple.*" Let us at this time

address the matter of the temple and then we will consider the matter of "*suddenly*." The temple which was standing at the time of Jesus was called Herod's temple. Such a name implies the work of Herod involved in the building of the temple. Malachi calls it "*his temple*." That is the temple of the Messenger of God.

Matthew 24 opens with certain ones trying to show Jesus the "*...building of the temple*." Listen to Jesus reply to these people in verse 2:

And Jesus said unto them see ye not all these things?  
Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one  
stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

The Lord was teaching, the temple will be destroyed. If Herod's temple would be destroyed, this could not be the Lord's temple.

In Daniel 2:44 we are given a picture of the coming kingdom. Look at these words: "*which shall never be destroyed...*" Yet Jesus predicted the destruction of Herod's temple. Is there any connection between the "*kingdom*" and the temple? Malachi says He will come to His temple. What therefore is "*His temple*?"

We turn now to Ephesians 2:19-22. Paul, in talking about the Gentiles, says in verse 19, they are "*...fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*."

Isaiah 2:3,

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let  
us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of  
the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways,  
and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall  
go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from  
Jerusalem.

Jews and Gentiles, according to Paul, made up the household of God. Isaiah prophesied that many would go to the "*house of the God of Jacob*." Paul again in I Timothy 3:15 calls the house of God, the church. "*...in the house of God, which is the church of the living God...*" Therefore the house or household of God is the church.

Back to Ephesians 2:20, Jesus is described as "*the chief cornerstone*." The issue of building is presented in Hebrews 3:6.

*"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." We are called "the household of God" in Ephesians 2:19. Paul declares that the house of God is the church in I Timothy 3:15. The writer of Hebrews calls Christians, the house of Christ. Again back to Hebrews 3:3. "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house." Hear now the word of the Lord in Matthew 16:18, "And I say also unto thee. That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The church and the house are one in the same.*

Remember now, we are talking about the household of God in Ephesians 2:21, *"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord."* The *"house of God"* is the temple of God which is the church of Christ. He shall come to *"His temple."*

What does Malachi mean by coming *"suddenly?"* The temple would be built out of *"stones"* which were the people of God. You cannot be a *"stone"* in the temple until you have obeyed the gospel of Christ. In Acts 2, the church had its beginning. From that day forth, the temple was to grow *"in the Lord."* How then are the events of Acts 2 described for us?

Acts 2:2 -- *"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."* On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 obeyed the gospel of Christ. We read in verse 47, *"...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

In Ephesians 2:22 we read *"In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit."* The messenger has come to *"His temple."*

Malachi 3:3 describes this messenger as being the *"messenger of the covenant."* He could therefore speak for Moses or else there would be a new covenant.

Colossians 2:14, *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."* The law

of Moses was to be taken out of the way. Hence the messenger would not be speaking for Moses but would make a new covenant. Hebrews 8:7, *"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second."* This likewise shows to us the role of law in the plan of God. Jesus was to be a messenger of covenant. This does not sound like man is free from law. The call has always been one of obedience for God's children.

Malachi further describes the messenger as being a *"refiners fire"* and fullers soap. As we view His spiritual work, we see Him as purifying and cleansing. As the *"refiner's fire"* he would bring the product of men's lives to what God designed them for from the beginning.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:11).

God's purpose was that men would worship and serve Him. As a result of fulfilling God's purpose, who did would be in heaven with God after death. Jesus would call people back to this kind of life.

Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (II Tim. 1:9).

God knew before the world began how He would save fallen man. It would be through His Son, Jesus Christ. All people will not be saved. Only those who are called by the gospel. Paul is stressing that salvation could not be found under the law of Moses (according to our works). Salvation is in God's Messenger.

For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:13-14).

How would the Messenger purify the sons of Levi?

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the



truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praise of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

We become Christians by obeying the truth. Having obeyed the truth we are now priests of God. We are therefore purified priests. Which is exactly what the Messenger was coming to do. These words could be fulfilled only in Jesus Christ. A changing of the law brought about a change in the priesthood. One great change in the priesthood was the holiness of the lives of the priests. How very different was the priest of Malachi's day as compared to Christians under the law of Christ. The God of judgment forever answers those questions of right and wrong by the sending of His messengers.

Malachi teaches that God will once again accept the offering of His people. But as always with conditions.

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:2).

Not a people offering animals but rather their own lives. Not in the sacrifice of human life but rather a soul in service to God.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

Even in the matter of real death, the Lord would have us know, He will not accept just any offering.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing (I Cor. 13:3).

The people of Malachi's day made the mistake of thinking that *"any offering would be acceptable to God."* Now however, the Messenger of God reveals to us, God will not accept just any offering. He would accept the offering of His

holy people as they live obedient lives unto Him. Have we today understood the message and the Messenger? Then let us give our lives in service to God each day.

As we now look at verse 5 the Messenger is portrayed as one who is coming in judgment. Malachi uses the words of "*swift witness*" to describe God's judgment against "*sorcerers, adulterers, and false swearers,*" etc. By the measure of truth, Jesus Christ would change the hearts of men. Listen to how Jesus describes the work of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8,

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16).

To those who will listen and obey the word of God, they will cease to live in the state of sin.

There is the case of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8 who became Simon the Christian. The man in Corinth who was living in a state of adultery but according to II Corinthians was restored. Peter was guilty of false swearing at the trial of Jesus but later was an ardent follower of the Lord. All of these charges were brought about because of the entrance of truth into their lives.

The remaining verses of 6-12 deal with problems in Israel in Malachi's day. True to the form of the prophet, he not only told of the future but likewise worked with the present. It is in dealing with sins that the anger of people is often aroused. Based on the conditions when Jesus came to the earth as man, it is evident that the messages of Malachi did not have a good hearing.

In verse 6 we are shown something of the character of God. The message is, "*God does not change.*" No matter how fickle man is in his devotion to God, God does not change to accommodate man. If God did change each time man altered his behavior, then men would be consumed. God's nature is such that He is very patient with those He has created. It is sheer folly for man to take advantage of the goodness of God. In Malachi's day, the children of God did not believe that God's patience would ever run out. Listen

carefully to how Peter describes the nature of God,

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9).

Do not misunderstand the language being used. Some will perish in spite of all which God has done.

In verse 7, God shows the past to those of Israel. Their history was one of departing from God. These people had left the ordinances of God. In our present time many are reluctant to speak about law in any form. It would seem easier to discuss the grace of God in terms of license rather than calling men to the Messenger of God through obedience to His will. One cannot set aside the law of God for any reason and expect His blessing.

Look at the promise in verse 7. If they would return to God, then God would return to them. Give thought to how much this particular theme is involved in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18).

God wants all men to be saved. We must take the message to a lost world. Unless the world comes to God through Jesus Christ, they will be lost. God called those of Malachi to come back where they truly belong. God, through Christ, continues to call all mankind to come to Him.

Malachi shows Israel one of the areas in which they had departed from God. In verse 8 he levels the charge against them of "*robbing God*." They would be upset with the charge and want to know how they had in any way "*robbed God*." Malachi gives the answer. It was in the matter of their "*tithes and offerings*." They failed to give to God what was rightfully His. Under the law of Christ, men are required to give. Tithing is not the New Testament means of giving. However one can rob God by not giving the right amount or not having the proper attitude in their giving.

The amount (as we have prospered--I Cor. 16:1) must be accompanied by the proper attitude (II Cor. 9:6-7). A failure on either account would bring us under the same condemnation as those in Malachi. We must give to God that

which is rightfully His.

According to verse 9 the whole nation was under a curse. To see God's people in this condition should cause us to appreciate even more the first 5 verses of this chapter. When the Messenger would come, He would bring deliverance to all. How precious is the fellowship we have with God and with each other. A fellowship made possible because the Messenger came and brought with Him, deliverance.

God in verse 10 gives a challenge to His people. The challenge was for them to give as they should and see if God would not bless them accordingly. This passage must be seen in light of the Old Testament promises by God to bless them physically based on their obedience. Under Christ our blessings are spiritual in nature (Eph. 1:3). If we obey God then we can too enjoy the blessings intended under Christ. Shall we as the people of God, "*prove Him?*" Shall we give ourselves in proper sacrifice to His service in order that God will bless us. The time is now for us to evaluate the worth of serving God. Are our lives any better because we have given ourselves to Christ?

The world waits for our answer. Can they see in us the joy of belonging to Christ? Are they able to understand the value of trusting God in the face of all adversity? In Malachi, the people had grown tired of worshipping God. They dreaded coming to His courts. They felt no guilt in cheating out God. Malachi came to warn them of their evil ways.

Are we any different today? The Messenger of God, Jesus Christ, has come to earth and revealed to us what God the Father is like. If we reject the message, then we have rejected the Messenger. May each of us as Christians renew the joy we have in Christ by returning to the word of God.

And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2).

Let us through Christ, renew our minds, and be always in the fellowship of our God. May God bless our study together.

# *Habakkuk*

Mac Deaver

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- I. Introduction (1:1)
  - II. Habakkuk complains about the wickedness in his land (1:2-4)
  - III. God promises to use the Chaldeans to punish Judah (1:5-11)
  - IV. Habakkuk complains regarding God's proposed use of the Chaldeans (1:12-17)
  - V. It is definite-God's punishment by means of the Chaldeans will surely come (2:1-3)
  - VI. Habakkuk's prayer (3:1-19)

## Introduction

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As God had used the Assyrians to punish the northern kingdom of Israel, just so would he use the Chaldeans to punish Judah.

Habakkuk lives during the time of Judah's wickedness, after the fall of Israel, but before Judah was invaded (3:16). He is distressed over the horrible immorality of his day (1:1-4). People in general have a disregard for the law of Moses. It is a time of violence, iniquity, perverseness, and destruction. There is strife and contention. Justice is not being served as the wicked dominate the righteous. Habakkuk complains to God regarding this horrible situation.

In 1:5-11 God promises that a destruction is coming. God says,

...I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling-places that are not theirs (1:5-6).

God gives a description of the Chaldeans which should terrify the hearts of those who could ever become their victims. Notice how they are described. (1) They are bitter and hasty, (2) they march through the earth to possess dwelling-places that are not theirs, (3) they are terrible and dreadful, (4) their judgment and dignity proceed from themselves, (5) their horses are swifter than leopards and more fierce than the evening wolves, (6) their horsemen press proudly on, (7) their horsemen come from afar and fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour, (8) they all come for violence, (9) the set of their faces is forwards, (10) they gather captives as the sand, (11) he (the nation as a whole or perhaps Nebuchadnezzar himself) scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him, (12) he derideth every stronghold, (13) he heapeth up dust, and taketh it, (14) he shall sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, even he whose might is his god.

Habakkuk is bothered by the thought that God was going to use the Chaldeans as the means of judgment and correction. Since the Chaldeans are unrighteous and ruthless, it is difficult for Habakkuk to see how God could possibly use them to punish his own people. The Chaldeans *"swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he."* How could God use such people to punish his own? They used their net to catch men and then paid homage to their net. They were enamored with their own power and with it they went forth conquering the nations.

In 2:1-3 Habakkuk says he will take his place to wait for further word from God concerning the vision he has been shown. He evidently hopes that there will be some change in what God has said will occur.

And Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth the vision is yet for the appointed time, and

it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay (2:2-3).

The plan will be enacted with no modification whatever. And Habakkuk is to write the vision down plainly upon tablets so that one can read the message and run.

In 2:4-5 we have further description of the Chaldeans or at least of their leader. (1) He is puffed up, (2) treacherous, (3) haughty, (4) keepeth not at home, (5) enlargeth his desire as sheol, (6) is as death, (7) cannot be satisfied but gathereth unto him all nations.

Then in 2:6-20 we have the woes that are suggested to come from the peoples that are plundered by the Chaldeans. Shall they not say such things regarding the Chaldeans? And so we learn that even though according to the vision God will use the evil Chaldeans as his weapon of war against Judah, God will also punish the Chaldeans. In the five woes that are pronounced, we see that a nation pursuing such a course as that which characterized the Chaldeans will in fact be brought to desolation. This should help Habakkuk and all of us as well to understand the justice involved in God's using such a wicked nation in the first place. Such a nation though providentially employed to bring about God's will, will for its own sin be finally punished.

Now let us turn our attention to the five woes of Habakkuk and learn the profound lessons therein taught:

## First Woe

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...Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges? Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them? Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein (2:6-7).

A Fundamental Lesson: We will reap what we have sown.

## Second Woe

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Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil! Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it (2:9-11).

A Fundamental Lesson: Evil means bring no security.

## Third Woe

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Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea (2:12-14).

A Fundamental Lesson: Men and nations are merely instruments in the hand of God to be used by him to bring about his will.

## Fourth Woe

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Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame, and not glory: drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory. For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein (2:15-17).

A Fundamental Lesson: The insulting and degrading treatment of one's fellowman will finally produce shame for the one thus guilty.



## Fifth Woe

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What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, even the teacher of lies, that he that fashioneth its form trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But Jehovah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him (2:18-20).

A Fundamental Lesson: A nation's only security is God.

Now let us consider the five woes in greater detail and consider various lessons that they teach.

## First Woe

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1. There are some things to which neither a man or a nation has a right (6).

(1) "*Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!*" It is true that there are some things that are not now mine that I have a right to given certain circumstances. I might be given something. Something might be sold to me. But such things are not being considered here. The Babylonians would overrun peoples and conquer them and exact from them that to which they have no right.

(2) Claiming to have a right over people doesn't give you the right to make demands of them. Justice demands that there be more than a claim.

2. Justice also means that there must be more than mere force or power to enforce a claim. The Chaldeans rejoiced in their power to subjugate other people. But brute force does not give one the right to treat his fellowmen that way. One of the early philosophers, Thrasymachus, believed that might made right. And others have fallen into that pit. One does not have a moral right to do what he is simply powerful enough to do. Nebuchadnezzar would later have to be taught that it wasn't simply by his own power that he was able to accomplish what he had, but rather that he was simply being

utilized by the God of all reality to bring about his will (Dan. 4:25). Both men and nations have taken risks in order to get that to which they had no right. But God's laws are constant in application, and somewhere along the line, a price will be exacted for the unlawful commodities obtained. The Babylonians exacted funds from others. The time would come when something would be exacted of them. Because they had plundered, they would be plundered.

## Second Woe

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1. No one has the right to take advantage of or abuse others (9). Nebuchadnezzar made many people feel insecure in order that he might bring security to himself and his throne. Trampling people in the dust in order that his power might be feared and his will respected was wrong. Matthew 7:12 should be practiced by those on thrones as well as those beneath them.

2. Self-exaltation at the expense of your brother's humiliation is wrong (9). The king of Babylon wanted to set his nest on high, to put himself beyond possible overthrow or calamity. But the means by which that can be accomplished is not the means by him chosen.

3. To fail to regard the rights of one's fellowman is a personality ruinous course to pursue (10, 11). Nebuchadnezzar in doing what he did brought shame to his house. And God says that he sinned against his own soul. His empire was built on sin. And even the stone and timber in his house testified to the ungodly course he had chosen (11).

## Third Woe

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1. The ruthless use of the sword cannot secure protection (12). God, of course, can make use of the sword. He did when he had the Jews take Palestine (cf. the book of Joshua). He has also invested the state with the legal use of the sword (Rom. 13:1-7). Ideally, the sword should be used with a view toward God. But when men forget God and use

the sword, thinking that it alone is the ultimate weapon, they do greatly err. The Bible clearly points out that if God wills that one who has inferior physical weapons be successful over another who has superior physical weapons, nothing can prevent that will from being carried out (cf. David against Goliath; Gideon against the Midianites).

2. God's ultimate will will be done (13). Though God would use Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to invade Judah, it wasn't because Nebuchadnezzar was trying to cooperate with God. He wasn't trying to do God's will. His motives were different from that. But, the truth is that God makes use of those who do not try to cooperate with him in bringing his will about. God uses all men to his glory. He uses those who want to be thus used, and he uses those who aren't trying to be thus used.

Remember, the Jews who had part in crucifying the Christ did not realize that they were being used by God in their sinful act (Acts 2:23). So, those who have motives of their own for doing certain things can be used by God to accomplish those things though God's motives are completely different. This truth is so profound. Who can possibly grasp the depth of it?

Verse 14 says, *"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea."* Though the Chaldeans were prompted by other motives when they later invaded Judah, God was using this situation as a part of the ongoing history which would finally bring about the preaching of the gospel throughout the world (cf. Col. 1:23). The Jews would be deported to Babylon. But as time would pass, the Babylonian Empire would as well. But the message of the kingdom which would never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44) would be preached throughout the world, including that part which in days before had been a part of the Babylonian Empire.

## Fourth Woe

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1. When men do not have and keep God in mind as their reason for living, they are capable of brutal and shameful conduct (15). Moral deterioration can develop to

the degree that human life is not respected, and to that degree human living becomes a dangerous matter. Living in a country or a world where human life is not highly regarded is an extremely dangerous affair. But, if God from whom all other life comes is not feared, why should we expect man's life to be greatly regarded (Gen. 20:11)?

2. The way to glory is submitting to God; the way to shame is to live without him (15-17). The glory that Nebuchadnezzar would come to realize in this world would be of extremely short duration. God would see to it that Nebuchadnezzar would learn who in fact remains always in complete control of this world. The Babylonians killed both man and beast (17). It is interesting to consider that God made Nebuchadnezzar later live for a while like a beast until the truth by him be understood that God rules (Dan. 4).

## Fifth Woe

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1. There is no protection in an idol (18, 19). Though there are "*gods many, and lords many*" these have never been able to help anyone at all. And though men have produced god after god and idol after idol, it has been simply another part of a sad human history in which most of mankind have turned their minds from the one true God and from doing His will. No "*god*" would be responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's future victory over Judah. That success would come from the One who later humbled the Babylonian king. Regarding metaphysical power, please notice that we do not find it with "*many gods*," for it is not there invested. It is located in the one true God. Idolatry has been a great blight on the record of human history. The "*gods*" have been the product of man's imagination and have been as helpless as they have been plentiful.

2. Jehovah is in his holy temple (20). While ignorant men pursue their course through this life perhaps ascribing their success to "*gods*" who do not really exist, Jehovah constantly inhabits eternity and resides in his holy temple. He is the one who can bring a king to his knees or a slave to a throne. Though kings on earth come and go, he is in perpetual control (Isa. 6:1). And all men should simply want

to know what he would have us do. We should respect the last part of the fifth woe: *"let all the earth keep silence before him."*

## Conclusion

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We have considered the five woes found in the book of *Habakkuk*. And we have thought about several important lessons that God taught within the woes given. May we be mindful of those lessons and appreciate truth therein taught.

# ***Sorrows Of Captivity***

*(Lamentations 1:1-11)*

**George W. DeHoff**

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## **I. Jerusalem**

1. Location
2. History
3. Destroyed

## **II. Why Lamentations?**

1. Why men suffer
2. All have faith challenged

## **III. Personal Responsibility**

1. Fruits of own carelessness
2. We reap what we sow

## **IV. Neglected Help**

1. We neglect only help
2. "*When Jesus came to Birmingham*"
3. Our indifference

## **V. Why Evil In World?**

1. Man's sin
2. Religious leaders
3. God allows us to choose "*Life or Death*"

## **Introduction**

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We are to study "*The Sorrows Of Captivity*" from the book of Lamentations. This book was written by Jeremiah immediately after the city of Jerusalem had been burned and

destroyed. He tells what happened to the people of God, why it happened and gives lessons which were not only needed by the people at that time but are needed today.

## Jerusalem

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Jerusalem is one of the most fabulous, historic and interesting cities in the world. It has been captured more than fifty times by an invading army -- more times than any other city in the world. It is a holy city to Jews, Christians and Moslems. During Old Testament times it was the capital and chief city of the Jews. Here they built their temple, here Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and arose from the dead. The Moslems made Jerusalem their third holy city, ranking it next after Mecca and Medina in Arabia.

Jerusalem lies on top of a region of broken hills called the Highlands of Judea. The city lies 2,618 feet above sea level. West of the city the Judean highlands slope down to meet the lowlands and the plains along the Mediterranean coast. Eastward Jerusalem looks down on the Wilderness of Judea, the Jordan valley and the Dead sea. The Mount of Olives rises east of Jerusalem. The city walls make the Old City look like a fortress. The walls are two and one half miles long and thirty-eight and a half feet high. Most of these walls were built in the 1500's, but parts are much older. The Old City is a network of cobblestone alleys, with shops on all sides. Outside the walls the city is quite modern.

The early history of Jerusalem is wrapped in obscurity. There was a settlement here as early as 2,500 B.C. In the time of the Tell-el-Amarna Tablets (1,400 B.C.) it was called U-ru-sa-lim, that is a city of Salim, generally taken to mean "*city of peace*." This is the name given to the city in the memorable interview of Abraham with Melchizedek, king of Salem (Gen. 14:18; Psm. 76:2). This word Salem is the basis of the Arabic greeting "*Salem*" and the Jewish greeting "*Shalom*," both meaning "*Peace be with you*." When the Israelites conquered Canaan, Jerusalem was known as Jebus and its inhabitants Jebusites (Judg. 19:10-11; I Chron. 11:4). The city was considered impregnable, but David and his men captured it (II Sam. 5:6-9; I Chron. 11:4-7). It was

called "*Zion*" and "*the city of David*." David made Jerusalem his capital and brought the Ark of the Covenant here (II Sam. 6:12-17; I Chron. 15). The city where David captured was on the hill, Ophel, south of the present city and was quite small. Solomon built the beautiful temple at Mount Moriah immediately to the north, the present location of the great Dome of the Rock.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed the city of 586 B.C. and carried the Jews into captivity (II Kings 25:1-21; II Chron. 36:15-21; Jer. 39:9-14). Nehemiah rebuilt the city after Cyrus, the Persian gave permission (Ezra 1:1-11; 6:1-3; Neh. 2:4-20; 6:15-16). Alexander the Great conquered this city in 332 B.C. and Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. The city has been totally destroyed at least five times, but has always been rebuilt in exactly the same location. It is thirty-three miles east of the Mediterranean sea and fourteen miles west of the Dead sea.

At the time of Jesus, the city had been greatly enlarged, mainly as a result of the builder Herod the Great. The city spread to the north and west of the original location on Ophel hill. The city was captured by Pompey in 64 B.C. and pillaged in 55 B.C. by Crassus. Herod the Great was made king of the Jews by Augustus in 40 B.C. He took Jerusalem in 37 B.C. after a siege of three months and immediately began to erect vast buildings including Herod's Temple, probably the most significant structure ever to stand upon that holy site. He began its erection in 20 B.C., died in 4 B.C. and work on the Temple continued until 62 A.D. In our Lord's day, it presented a spectacle before which even the disciples stood in amazement (Matt. 24:1).

In accordance with the prophecy of Jesus (Luke 19:41-44; Luke 21:20-24), Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Roman Legions under Titus. The emperor Hadrian built a pagan city on this site which he called Aelia Capitolina. Since then the city has been held by Christians in the third century, the Persians in the seventh century, by the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Arabs under Saladin and the Ottoman Turks from 1517 A.D. until the Allied troops under General Allenby entered the city in 1917. Allenby walked into the city, considering himself unworthy to ride into the city of the



great king (incidentally the surrender flag was a white sheet from the bed of Mrs. John G. Spafford). After World War I, Jerusalem, and Palestine were placed under British mandate, which was given up in 1948, following the War of Liberation. The United Nations partitioned the country between Israel and Jordan, later in the War of 1968, Israel occupied the whole land.

Entire books have been written on the subject of Jerusalem. The city is referred to 600 times in the Old Testament. The four gospels give a record of the early life of Christ, His ministry, His death and His resurrection, all centering around Jerusalem. The final week of our Lord's life was spent in or near the city (Matt. 27:1-66; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:23; John 12:19). It was here that our Lord appeared to His disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24; John 20:26-29; Acts 1:1-8; Luke 24:49). From the nearby Mount of Olives, He ascended back to heaven (Luke 24:50-53).

The church was born in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). In this city, Paul was arrested, mobbed in the temple and falsely accused (Acts 21 and 22).

In the city of Jerusalem are dozens of places of historical and Biblical interest. Most of these may be reached by walking about the city.

Tonight's lesson tells what happened to Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon destroyed the city in 586 B.C. and carried the Jews into captivity. Buildings were destroyed, walls were torn down and much of the city was burned. Jeremiah was there when this was going on. It is said that he hid in a cave now called, "*the Grotto of Jeremiah*" and that during three months following the sacking of the city he wrote the book of Lamentations. The book of Lamentations was written, not merely to describe the tragic destruction of Jerusalem but to interpret the meaning of God's righteous treatment of His people to the end that they would learn the lessons of the past and retain their faith in God in the face of overwhelming disaster. There is deep sorrow over the past and some complaint but there is also radiant hope for the future -- particularly in the last chapter of Lamentations. This book is not often read, yet God must have had a reason for including it in the sacred

Scriptures. *"The foolishness of God is wiser than men"* (I Corinthians 1:23). The Bible has a strange way of justifying itself against the protest of those who object to this or that book or a particular statement in the Word of God. It is easy for us to become careless in the presence of human misery and we need reminders of the solemn fact that there is much in human life that calls for sorrow and penitence. Our Lord Jesus Christ pronounced a blessing upon *"those that mourn"* and those who were *"persecuted."* We must be alive to the presence in the world of sorrow, pain and misery and to have some sense of personal responsibility in it all.

Few if any lives can go through the world without facing experiences that challenge faith. If God is just, kind, our God, how can such trials and sorrows come? Why should God act thus toward us His own children? In every age there are many who find faith difficult to maintain when life is so hard and merciless. All Christians have an answer which surpasses any other in that their leader, our Lord Himself, the object of our faith is one who suffered so terribly that He cried out on the cross, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* Out of that tragic experience came the greatest spiritual force the world has ever known. Lamentations was written before men had the comfort which Christ brought to the world. We may, therefore, find it significant to walk for a while with those who centuries before us faced life at its worst and yet had seen some bits of hope and faith left.

## Personal Responsibility

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Israel had been carried away into Babylonian captivity. First Nebuchadnezzar took the elite, the prominent people who he thought would be of some help to his nation. Among these were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nineteen years later he returned and finished his destruction of the city of Jerusalem and took thousands of other people to Babylon. Nehemiah pointed out that God had promised Israel that she could stay in the land if she kept His commandments but that if the people rebelled against God they would be destroyed. They did go into idolatry and they

suffered. Nehemiah attempted to tell them that they had a personal responsibility for what had happened. He asked them, now, to look forward (Lam. 1:7). Almost everybody is inclined to look back and think how things used to be. The man of faith must look forward and believe that good will come. Rabbi Ben Ezra said, *"The best is yet to be, the last of life for which the first was made."* Our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples when they were asking about the end of the world that they would hear of wars and rumors of wars, *"Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."* But he added, *"When these things begin to come to pass then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh"* (Luke 21:26, 28).

Nehemiah said that the city and the nation were suffering grievously but were only reaping the fruit of their own carelessness and sin. *"The Lord had afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions"* (v. 5). This tragic situation was looked upon as coming from God's anger, but it is made abundantly clear that the wrath of God is upon the people because of their sins. Over and over again God is represented as ultimately responsible for these hard and tragic conditions, *"Why has our God forsaken us and brought upon his people such a terrible fate?"* It is a spirit all too common when trouble comes upon us to blame God instead of recognizing that we are reaping what we sow.

Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem each stanza of which leads to the question from a soul in the throes of some hard experience, *"Why has the gods afflicted me?"* The answer comes with force at the end:

This was none of the good Lord's pleasure;  
For the Spirit He sets in Man is free;  
But what comes after is measure for measure  
And not a God that afflicteth thee.  
As with the sowing so the reaping  
Is now, and evermore shall be.  
Thou art delivered to thine own keeping,  
Only thyself hath afflicted thee.

It is a basic principle of all true religion that we must reap what we sow. A great preacher once said to his students, *"Never forget that 'whatsoever a man soweth that*

*shall he also reap.' You have to reap what you sow. Do you ask, 'If I repent and God forgives me, then will I have to reap?' The answer is yes, nothing can change that law. You reap what you sow."* Some student then asked, *"Well then, what good is there in repentance and forgiveness?"* The minister answered, *"Ah, then God will help you in the hard work of reaping."*

## The Neglected Help

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Jeremiah asks a question (Lam. 1:12), *"Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?"* The great Foy E. Wallace, Jr. used to point out some of the errors in the church and then to cry in a plaintive voice, *"Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?"* This was the lesson Jeremiah wanted the people to see -- that they had neglected to serve God and therefore trouble had come upon them. Ira North used to preach a great sermon entitled, *"The meanest man in the Bible."* He preached on the parable of the talents and pointed out that the one talent man did nothing for which the Lord called him, *"Thou wicked and slothful servant."* There is no greater sin today than the sin of neglect. G. A. Studdert-Kennedy pointed this out in his famous poem about people neglecting Christ. He said:

When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged Him on a tree.  
They drove great nails through hands and feet, and made  
a Calvary.

They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His  
wounds and deep,  
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh  
was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham they simply passed Him by,  
They never hurt a hair on Him, they only let Him die;  
For men have grown more tender, and they would not  
give Him pain,  
They only just passed down the street, and left Him in  
the rain.

Still Jesus cried, 'Forgive them, for they know not what  
they do!'  
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him  
through and through;

The crowd went home and left the streets without a  
soul to see,  
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary.

In striking contrast with the carelessness and spiritual indifference of the people Jeremiah wanted them to consider how they should be deeply concerned. Indeed, it is terrible today to consider our indifference when compared *"with the agony of primitive Christianity."* Consider the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). The *"cup"* of which He drank contained a mixture of rejection by His own people, betrayal by one of His disciples, denial by another, treachery on the part of those in authority, want of sympathy from His friends, the base ingratitude of His people, terrible loneliness of spirit, the burden of humanity in sins, His own foreknowledge of His painful death. Consider also the agony of Jesus on the Cross (Matt. 27:46). Consider the need of this element of agony in our modern Christianity today. Without suffering for Christ, we will not receive the *"sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord"* (Heb. 12:14). To some Christianity is only a system of dogma, to others a code of ethics and to some a mental philosophy and a social system. Others think of it only in terms of ritual and ceremony. Cynical *"reformers"* with communistic tendencies have pronounced it nothing more than a superstitious cult which dulls the senses and stifles the aspirations of the poor and down trodden. Others think of it constructively in terms of spiritual idealism, or as a way of life. All these views fall far short, however of an exact evaluation, for the simple reason that they overlook this essential element of agony. We must learn to suffer for Christ. We like to think of Christianity as bringing joy and peace to our hearts. We sometimes forget that we are *"wresting...not against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Eph. 6:12).

Jesus knew what it was to agonize. He was tempted in the wilderness. This struggle was real. Over and over again He has taught us to take up our crosses daily and follow

Him. Paul the greatest Christian soldier the church has ever had certainly knew what it meant to agonize. He recounted his persecutions as a *"bondslave of Christ"* (II Cor. 11:23-33). His epistle to the Romans has been rightly termed *"the spiritual autobiography of a great soul."* Who can read the seventh chapter of Romans in which he describes the never ending soul-struggle, the ceaseless conflict of the higher self against the lower, the spiritual against the carnal -- the victory of the latter meaning death in all that the term implies, but that of the former meaning life eternal. In depicting his inner struggle for our encouragement, he reaches the climax when he cries out, in full realization of his own helplessness: *"wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"* And in a flash, faith supplies the answer to his cry and the solution for his problems: *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Paul won the victory by his faith and trust in Christ (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Jeremiah sought to have the people of his day recognize their condition and agonize over it. We need to agonize today and pray for God to forgive our indifferences and neglect. We need to pray for Him to put life into the Valley of Dry Bones which represents the church in many places and put flesh and sinews of spiritual knowledge and strength upon them. *"Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?"*

## Why Evil In God's World?

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Jeremiah points out that the evil in God's world is here because of man's sinfulness (2:1-3). He put much of this blame on their religious leaders who had failed to condemn evil and set a good example before the people (2:9-10, 14). He said, *"Jerusalem hath previously sinned therefore she has become as an unclean thing"* (v. 8). Without a moment's hesitation, he compared them to the evil city of Sodom. Tragedy of this situation was looked upon as coming from God, but Jeremiah made it abundantly clear that the wrath of God was upon the people because of their own sins. Moffatt's translation of verse nine says: *"She never thought of what would follow so her fall was tragic."* As the people

cried for help, Jeremiah told them to turn to God, none but God could help them (3:37-39).

## Life And Death

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God set before the people life and death: *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessings and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live"* (Deut. 30:19). Joshua called upon the people to choose whether or not they would serve God. He said, *"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."*

Jeremiah called upon the people not to be afraid (3:55-57). The message of God all through the Bible has been *"Do not fear."* Our God is able to deliver us. He teaches us not to be afraid of life, of death or eternity (see Matt. 18:23-25).

The people attempted to blame someone else for their troubles (5:7). Jeremiah called for them to have a national prayer for mercy (5:1-22). When we read how these people blamed others for their troubles we are doubtless reminded of our own attitude today -- nothing bad happens but what we blame other people. We overlook the fact that all sin, trouble and sorrow is a result of man's sinfulness and that much of trouble today is a result of our own sinfulness. The church itself is in trouble because its members have not lived as God said for them to live.

We fail to make the right use of this book if we simply thank God that we have never attributed to God the ills of our life. Rather, we should earnestly consider our own misuse of religion. Our contentment with the thought that we have, indeed, come now upon better days, we should search our hearts realizing how easily we take what faith God has given us simply as a pleasant assurance of personal salvation. How lightly we turn cross and crucifix into ornaments or mere reminders of how we were *"saved"* by the death of our Lord. From what? His cross is a solemn presentation to us of the evil state of the world in which the greatest man who ever lived, God's own unspeakable gift to the world after a few hard years was condemned to a cruel

death. And we? Shall we come cheaply out of the struggle? We call Jesus Lord and Master. What then of the divisions of the church? What of the insistence on creeds and practices and tenets never mentioned in the Bible? Are these to be the "*entrance requirements*" for all who would enlist in the army of the Lord? What of the easy religious life we lead? And in a world like ours! God be praised that the dreadful agony of this book of Lamentations is not ours; but God pity us unless by His spirit and at cost we dedicate ourselves to Him anew and to the true and full worship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.



# *The Great Invitation*

Joe Gilmore

We appreciate invitations. Invitations inform us that someone cares enough to invite, and make plans for us while at the same time respect our freedom.

This invitation from Christ was given more than nineteen hundred years ago. It holds good today. People who labor and are heavy laden may find refuge in Christ. What precious words:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

These words are gracious and precious to the soul. They remind us of other precious invitations such as:

Come let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isa. 1:18).

And the Spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Our Lord's words were words of tender concern.

And invitation always implies the ability to accept. The heavy laden with burdens can and must come, Jesus our Lord invites.

## **1. "Come Unto Me"**

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No man could make such an invitation. We have never heard of any man saying, "*Come unto me.*" A gospel preacher never makes this statement. Gospel preachers ask

men to come to Christ. God's Son can request this of people. Christ is the *source* of the great invitation. Christ offers this invitation at great cost. Paul said, *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich"* (II Cor. 8:9). Jesus left the riches of heaven, and came to this earth as a man, suffered and died on a cross for us.

The great invitation is wide in scope. It is directed to the entire human race. Jesus invites all. It carries the charm of the impartial. ALL.

The word *"come"* suggests simplicity. We have the power to come. To come to Christ is not difficult or complicated. Coming to Christ is essential. He says, *"I will give you rest."* How intimate an invitation! It means, come unto Me, and I will rest you.

## 2. Who May Come?

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Babies and irresponsible people cannot come. That is, babies cannot come to the Lord for salvation, because babies have never been lost. Children are innocent and already in the Lord's favor. You cannot save something that is not lost. Children being innocent are already in a safe condition. Children are not born in sin as some churches teach. *"In sin did my mother conceive me"* (Psm. 51:5) does not mean that David was born a sinner. Sin no doubt was in his mother, but not in the baby, David. If the passage means that David was born a sinner then David and Jesus taught opposite views. Jesus taught that children were pure and sinless, and told man that if he were to be saved he must be converted and become as a little child (Matt. 18:1-3). If children are sinners, what change has taken place when a sinner becomes a little child? Children being pure and sinless, we can easily see the change it would make in man to become *as* a little child.

Many today refuse to come to Jesus. Jesus is not withholding saving power.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life  
(John 5:40).

Jesus did not say that they could not come. If these people were to believe in God with all the heart and love Him they would come to Jesus. Jesus said, *"If a man loves me, he will keep my words"* (John 14:23). One cannot play ignorant and say that he does not know how to come.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (II Thess. 1:7-9).

To delay is dangerous. The Lord has extended His gracious invitation. You should accept it now!

In coming to Christ and going to heaven one is expected to start. Then he must complete the journey. The Bible teaches there is just one road to heaven.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

How does one get into this way? There are some plain Scriptures that inform us as to the how. Permit me to read without comment:

Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:14-16).

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her

treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized them. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea (Acts 8:26-40).

To come to Christ means to follow His teaching. *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"* (Luke 6:46).

### 3. What The Great Invitation Implies?

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It implies that man is away: *"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God"* (Isa. 59:2). Paul caused the Ephesians to remember:

Ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from

the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12).

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).

It implies that man may come: *"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. and he that is athirst, let him Come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely"* (Rev. 22:17). Our Lord does not withhold saving power from anyone. To some who were disobedient Jesus said, *"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life"* (John 5:40).

It implies man must come: man has sinned against his Lord and is separated from God. God did not do the leaving. Man has sinned and must return to God: *"We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"* (II Cor. 5:20). Man must obey God.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (I John 2:4-5).

The great invitation implies that man may be blessed providing he comes to Christ in the Lord's appointed way. Christ will pardon those who do His will, obey His word. *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Eph. 1:7). *"It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me"* (John 6:45).

#### 4. "Take My Yoke Upon You"

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The Lord promised to balance the burden. For centuries the human race had been carrying heavy burdens. Many were poor, traveled on foot and were too poor to own an ox, or a camel or donkey. On their backs and heads they carried water, brick, grain, lumber and straw. These poor people had problems of balancing the things they lifted and put on their backs. Then came a wonderful invention. There

was an Eli Whitney in the ancient world, his name is not known to us. But his invention is known to us and has blessed man. A thinker divided a heavy load into two equal parts and hanging these two burdens by ropes from the two ends of a stick placed across the shoulder. By this simple means the task of the burden-bearer was made much easier and lighter.

Once the poor burden-bearer was on his way, and in the rhythm of a steady step or trot the burdens swinging on their ropes like pendulums seemed to lift the carrier along and the weight on the shoulders grew astonishingly light. This invention grew, in time, to have a name. It was called a yoke. Here was a balance like a pair of scales. This was not an ox-yoke, but a man-yoke.

To these burden-bearers Jesus said, "*Take my yoke upon you.*" What, resume the road again? Yes, but not in their old yokes. Now they have broken their journey at the Lord's invitation and are sent forth under His authority. They are to bear His yoke.

The yoke was an invention to ease the labor life. To take His yoke meant to accept His *strength*, His *wisdom*, His *method*, of living and laboring!

## 5. "I Will Give You Rest"

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The yoke of Christ is a rest-giving yoke. It is not rest from fatigue of which the Lord speaks, but rest from the yoke and burden of sin, our guilts. The Lord would save us from our losses, failures and bereavement. He wants us to know He cares, "*Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you*" (I Pet. 5:7). When Jesus saw His friends deserting Him and it seemed to His disciples that His cause was about to fail, Jesus promised to give rest with a yoke. They needed the yoke of Christ to learn patience. The followers would have made Christ an earthly king. This did not get settled for them until after the resurrection of Jesus.

## 6. "And Learn Of Me, For I Am Meek And Lowly In Heart"

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Here is a tenderness that we must not miss. Before the

burden-bearer resumes the road he must be informed of Jesus. Jesus becomes his teacher. His credential is, "*I am meek and lowly in heart.*" He is one of them! I, too, am a burden-bearer. Only a man in a yoke knows the tricks of a yoke. There is the shaping of a yoke to know. There is the adjusting of the burdens to know. There is the weight of the burdens to determine. There is the art of stopping without a jar. There is the finer art of starting without strain. There is the steadiness of gait to be acquired. There is endurance to be developed. There is a highway to know and markets to understand and other toilers to deal with in the bitter press of ceaseless competing.

Jesus was a toiler. He placed His wisdom on the way of life at their disposal.

## 7. "And Ye Shall Find Rest Unto Your Souls"

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The word REST does not denote an *end* of the journey. It means an intermission. Think of soldiers halting for a brief rest while on the march! The march is to be resumed, the campaign is not over. They are halting for the purpose of gaining strength for what lies ahead.

The word REST refers to a *resting-place*. On ancient highways there were resting stones. Burdens were placed here and slid back on the carriers as the journey was resumed. Jesus was a carrier and could instruct as to the road to take.

## 8. "For My Yoke Is Easy, And My Burden Is Light"

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Evil masters often overloaded their slaves with more staggering burdens. But the burdens Jesus would assign are far lighter than worldly people would put upon others.

The great invitation is the toiler's text. Work is in the program of God. "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*" (John 9:4). "*Work out your own salvation with fear*

*and trembling"* (Phil. 2:12). Jesus has not planned that we work without Him!

## **9. The Great Invitation Shows Man's Responsibility**

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Man has been given the responsibility of doing something for himself. Noah could not stop the flood, but he could and did build the ark as God commanded. The blind man could not cure his blindness, but he could go to the pool of Siloam and wash as Jesus instructed him to do (John 9). We cannot remove our own sins, but we can obey the gospel of Christ and let the blood of Christ cleanse us!

## **10. "The Great Invitation Also Shows Us The Value Of Time"**

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Paul said, "*Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation*" (II Cor. 6:2). Now is the time to obey Christ. There is the story about a young man's reaction to (Prov. 23:26). "*My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*" This bright boy heard and was deeply impressed by these words. But he did not surrender to the Lord. He did not obey the gospel because he had plenty of time. Ten years later a brilliant collegian heard the same message under favorable circumstances, but there was still plenty of time. Twenty years later a statesman of considerable fame heard the same text from a gospel preacher, but at the moment there was much government work to be done, nations to be visited, great responsibilities to meet. While on one of the state missions, he was stricken and died. He was heard to say, "*Too late.*" The bright boy, the brilliant collegian, the renowned statesman were all the same. He has passed many opportunities by. Procrastination gave Satan the victory.

Picture Jesus standing in the midst of all the cruel types of human pains and pangs, calm, pure and with outstretched hands, conscious of power and love, inviting all to look to Him as the "*meek and lowly*" and saying, "*Come unto me.*"



It is said that speaking from one point of view the largest word in the Bible is "*God*," the sweetest is "*love*," the most musical is "*come*," the longest is "*eternity*" and the shortest is "*now*." The word now means "*At the present moment*."

The merchant watches the market for the most opportune time to buy or sell his goods. The farmer watches the weather for the most favorable time to plant his seed, and the sailors watch the wind and tide for the most favorable time to sail. Why should not the sinner do a similar thing and leave the harbor of sin and set sail for heaven?

NOW holds out certain blessings to man that one may never have access to again. NOW finds you on time's side of the grave, and enjoying a reasonable portion of health; also with strength, intelligence and the presence of mind to get right with God; whereas, tomorrow may find you unconscious upon a bed of affliction, racked with pain and scorched with fever, and with but a few hours to live. NOW, this very moment may be the last and only chance you will ever have to get right, obey the gospel, with the Lord. Why not settle this matter today? Solomon said, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*" (Prov. 27:1). Build your hope for eternity in heaven. Do not build on the quick-sand of sin and worldly pleasure. Listen to the words of Jesus on this subject:

Everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it (Matt. 7:26-27).

There is urgency about this great invitation. It is from death to life, from doom to salvation and from judgment and eternal punishment to heaven. Jesus is Lord of the HIGHWAY OF LIFE. Come to Christ, let Him ease and rest you. Then let Him send you forth. Under the Lord's guidance you will always find a resting stone just when you need it most. Your burdens will be light because you will not be carrying worries, envyings, selfish ambitions or worldly pride.







