

TWENTIETH ANNUAL
"LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD"
LECTURESHIP, 2012

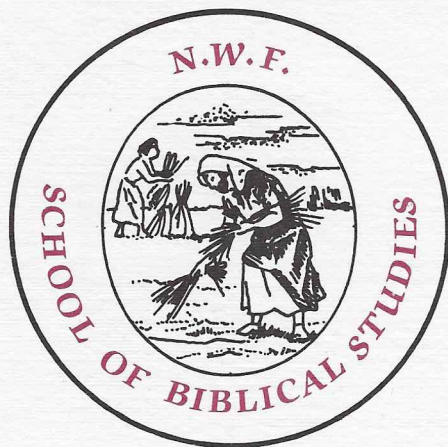
Virtual Sermons And Object Lessons

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THE HARVEST

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest."

(Luke 10:2)



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**TWENTIETH ANNUAL
"LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD"
LECTURESHIP**

February 19-23, 2012

THEME:

**VIRTUAL SERMONS AND
OBJECT LESSONS**

**Editor:
Alan Adams**

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FORWARD

In the matter of revelation, God saved the best for last. "At the end of these days [He has] spoken unto us in his Son" (Heb. 1:1). Through the ages, though, and leading up to the "end of these days," Inspiration says, God "spoke...unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1). This means He revealed His will to man bit by bit and in many ways.

Sometimes, as noted, God spoke "in the prophets" — "Thus saith the Lord" (Isaiah 7:7). Sometimes God assumed corporeal form and spoke to men — "Jehovah God called unto the man, and said, unto him, Where art thou" (i.e. Gen. 3:9)? God has spoken to men through His creation — "The heavens declare the glory of God" (cf. Psalm 19:1). One may say that God speaks to men through the sense of 'oughtness' with which He has endowed us — "Their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them" (Rom. 2:15). He speaks to men "in words which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13); and, particularly and permanently He speaks by written words — "by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:3,4).

One may say God has gone to great lengths to communicate with men. In the hearing of Elihu, Job had once complained "that [God] giveth not account of any of his matters" (Job 33:13). Elihu countered saying, "God speaketh once, yea twice, though man regardeth it not" (v.14). He went on to enumerate some of the "divers" ways in which "God speaketh": "In a dream, in a vision of the night" (v.15); "in slumberings upon the bed" (v.15); and, when "he is chastened also with pain upon his bed" (v.19). Elihu began the point saying that "God speaketh once, yea twice," and ended saying, "Lo, all these things doth God work, twice, yea thrice with a man" (v.29). In the end, then, man has no grounds upon which to claim that God "giveth not account of any of his matters." He has spoken first one way, and then another.

Printed by:

Bates Printing & Binding

Hwy 6 North / P.O. Box 97

Nettleton, MS 38858

(662) 963-3671

Email: orders@oldpathspublishing.com

Online bookstore: www.oldpathspublishing.com

In this twentieth annual Labourers Together With God lectureship, we are dealing generally with the idea of God's having communicated with man, but particularly His having done so through what we are calling: *Virtual Sermons and Object Lessons*. In computer parlance, the idea of "virtual reality" refers to seemingly real situations, which are created or simulated by electronic digital means. In our usage, though, so-called virtuality is taken to far greater heights. We refer to those times when God by his Spirit injected prophets or other chosen vehicles of communication into settings where they interact with virtual characters and situations, such as Peter and the "trance" in Acts 10-11, or Zechariah engaging the man charged with measuring Jerusalem (Zech. 2). By "object lessons," we refer to those times when God instructs prophets or others to do certain things, or otherwise engages them in specific ways so as to convey ideas and doctrines he desires to reveal to his people. An example of such would be when "the prophet, named Agabus [came] and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:10,11).

Please take a look at the topics to be discussed in this great lectureship. When initially planning the topics, we went through the Bible and easily found in excess of eighty such instances God's speaking through divinely created virtual settings, or through interesting object lessons. There are certainly many more. What can we learn from angels going up and down a ladder? What about the half-shekel in the mouth of "randomly" caught fish? What is God saying to us in Jacob's all night wrestling match? Did the donkey speak only to Balaam, or to us as well?

This twentieth annual lectureship coincides with twenty-five years of operation for the ***Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies***. We like the symmetry; we like the school and our lectureship; we love our supporters and friends.

Thus we present to you this book of outlines with five questions attached to each in hopes the book can also be utilized as a Bible class text.

—Alan Adams, Director
February 2012

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THE RECHABITES

Jeremiah 35

Cade Somers

1. Do you know any unbelievers who exemplify greater godliness than certain Christians?
2. As disappointing as it may be, the occurrence is not at all uncommon.
 - a. Jesus used an unjust steward to show that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8, 1-11).
 - b. Samaritans were used on a couple occasions as examples to the Jews and Jesus' disciples.
 - 1) The Samaritan woman depicts openness to truth and then a willingness to teach the Gospel to others (John 4:1-42).
 - 2) The good Samaritan cared for his neighbor when the priest and Levite did not (Luke 10:25-37).
 - c. The Gentiles "have attained unto righteousness..., But Israel...hath not" (Rom. 9:30-31).
 - d. In this lesson, the virtual sermon/object lesson is a group of people called the Rechabites about whom we read in Jeremiah 35. They, too, prove to serve as an ironic object lesson to God's people.
3. What comes naturally to the turtle, crane, and swallow, people do not always grasp; Christians can become like the Jews who did not "know the judgment of the Lord" (Jer. 8:7), ignoring the directions of our Father.
4. When we ignore the teachings of our parents, how can we expect our children to choose the virtuous life they may only have as a faithful Christian?
5. Even considering the likelihood that the Rechabites, a Canaanite people, were proselyte Jews, one should have still been shocked at the contrast of behavior between them and the Israelites. Theirs is a lesson that is historic, thematic, and basic (foundational).

DISCUSSION:

I. THE RECHABITES TEACH US A LESSON THAT IS HISTORIC.

- A. They were descendants of the Kenites through the Beerothites in Canaan, "reckoned to Benjamin" (1 Chron. 2:54-55; 2 Sam. 4:2). Although not of the Israelites' bloodline, the Rechabites are believed to have become Jewish proselytes.
 1. This includes being a descendent of Moses's father-in-law, also a Kenite (Judges 1:16).

2. Moses wanted him to go with the Israelites to Canaan (Num. 10:29-33).
- B. Rechab was a captain under Saul's son Ishbosheth (2 Sam. 4:2).
 1. In an act of immense passion, he deceived and killed Saul's son Ishbosheth, cut off his head and took it to David.
 2. Despite Rechab's intentions, David reproved him and put him to death (2 Sam. 4:2-9).
- C. Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, drew the Canaanite general Sisera into her tent and drove a tent nail into his temple, killing him (Judges 5:24,27).
- D. Jonadab, seen in our text (i.e. Jer. 35), is one of the most memorable Rechabites (2 Kings 10:15-28).
 1. Jonadab united with Jehu to vanquish the family of Ahab and the prophets of Baal.
 2. When Jehu met Jonadab, Jehu said, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with my heart?" Jonadab said, "It is" (2 Kings 10:15).
 3. Together, they arranged a massacre of idol worshippers in the temple of Baal (2 Kings 10:23-28).

II. THE RECHABITES TEACH US A LESSON THAT IS THEMATIC.

- A. Families consist of different members with different roles (Jer. 35:8-9).
 1. Fathers have inherent authority and should guide their children in a good way.
 2. Wives, sons, and daughters should all be submissive to the spiritual leadership of the father in the home (Col. 3:18,20).
 3. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Eph. 6:1).
- B. Regardless of the source of tests, we should maintain the convictions which have supported our being "grounded and settled" (Jer. 35:1-6; Col. 1:23).
 1. God tested Jonadab through Jeremiah, but He was not tempting to make him sin.
 - a. The context does not require us to conclude this "wine" is fermented (i.e. alcoholic). The Nazarite vow similarly forbade non-alcoholic wine, or grape juice (Judges 13:7; Luke 1:15).
 - b. The other prohibitions about building and planting likewise would not involve inherently sinful acts if committed.

- c. Jonadab's orders would keep his descendants from becoming settled (Jer. 35:7). Wine (i.e. grape juice), vineyards, and buildings all imply permanence.
 - 2. God tests, but does not tempt (James 1:13-15; 1 Cor. 10:13).
- C. Leadership in the home is not limited to relaying explicit Bible commands (Jer. 35:8-10).
 - 1. "Thou shalt not lie" and "Honor thy father and mother" are both necessary, but a good parent looks at individuals and applies God's law as he sees best.
 - 2. There are numerous examples of rules that are relative but equally authorized by God that children must keep (Prov. 6:20; Eph. 6:1):
 - a. Jonadab's rules were not Jewish rules: "Ye shall drink no wine"; "Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers" (Jer. 35:6-7).
 - b. e.g. Curfews, dress codes, rules of speech/addressing authority, time requirements for study, chores, family devotions, prioritizing, etc.
 - c. Jonadab's action is similar to what elders do in order to maintain active, faithful churches, setting times for services and classes, expectations of attendance and activity, guidelines for church discipline, requirements to help in activities/works, etc.
- D. For many groups of people, time's generational divide disrupts continuity of faith and wisdom (Jer. 6:16; Judges 2:10).
 - 1. 250-300 years of devotion to Jonadab's proclamation — the Rechabites were remarkable for maintaining traditional ideals.
 - 2. The U.S. has largely shifted from its founding principles. Little good can be said of it.
 - 3. Many churches of Christ have also shifted from worthy faith and endeavors of the "restorationists."

III. THE RECHABITES TEACH A LESSON THAT IS BASIC, OR FOUNDATIONAL.

- A. Jonadab chose a nomadic lifestyle for his descendants. Certain aspects of the Christian life can also be viewed similarly (Heb. 11:13-16).
- B. The Rechabites' reliance on the Jews for a place of refuge from the Babylonians (Jer. 35:11) a shadow of the church as a place of refuge for the world (Heb. 6:18; 1 Thess. 1:10).

- C. They foreshadow God's acceptance of the Gentiles into the kingdom (Jer. 35:18,19; Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:18) and the Gentiles' willingness to hear (Acts 13:46-48).

CONCLUSION:

1. After hearing or reading this lesson, what will you remember about the Rechabites?
2. They weren't just some group foreign to Bible readers that we should just overlook. They are so important that God places in a superior position to his own people of Jeremiah's audience.
3. Strive to be faithful to your Father at all times. Be a good parent. Abstain from anything that causes you to lose focus on your eternal goal. Maintain your faith through trials.
4. Do as the Rechabites in obeying their father and be blessed eternally (Jer. 35:19; 1 John 5:1-4).

QUESTIONS

1. Name three Rechabite/Kenite ancestors that serve as examples to us. What lessons can we learn from each?
 2. There are some people who conclude the wine Jonadab prohibited must have been alcoholic. Although it was not discussed in the lesson in detail, besides explaining that the Hebrew word used (*yayin*) is general and can refer to fermented or unfermented grape juice, how can you explain from Jeremiah's context this is likely not an alcoholic beverage?
 3. How do people usually view old beliefs or values? Apply the lesson of the Rechabites to how members of the church view their spiritual ancestors, including the apostles and leaders of the Restoration Movement? Does contemporary America disregard any of the sound precepts taught by its founders who lived over 250 years ago?
 4. In what way(s) does the New Testament compare the nomadic life like that of the Rechabites to the Christian life?
 5. What role do fathers have in the home? What kinds of rules should they have for the home? In what ways should they guide their families? Many rules are not inherently moral or amoral if kept (e.g. "Nor to build houses," Jer. 35:9), but may still be important in the big picture. How should children view such rules they may not think are as important?
-

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

Jeremiah 18

Victor M. Eskew

1. We live in a Rubbermaid and Tupperware generation.
 - a. Thus, we know a lot about manufactured plastic containers.
 - b. However, we do not know nearly as much about the formation of the clay pots used in Old Testament times.
2. Thus, it behooves us to do a diligent study of the trade of pottery making as we enter into this lesson.
3. Our text is taken from Jeremiah 18:1-6: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, ²Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. ³Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold he wrought a work on the wheels. ⁴And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter. so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. ⁵Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ⁶O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."

DISCUSSION:

I. THE OUTLINE (Jer. 18:1-6).

- A. The Instruction (Jer. 18:1-2).
 1. The Authorization (Jer. 18:1): "The word...from the Lord"
 2. The Admonition (Jer. 18:2): "Arise, and go down to the potter's house."
- B. The Observation (Jer. 18:3-4)
 1. The Formation (Jer. 18:3): "...he wrought a work on the wheels."
 2. The Imperfection (Jer. 18:4a): "...and the vessel...was marred in the hand of the potter..."
 3. The Re-creation (Jer. 18:4b): "...so he made it again another vessel."
- C. The Application (Jer. 18:5-6): "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?"

II. THE OBJECTS.

- A. The potter's house is one object in our discussion.
 1. This was his work place — his place of manufacturing pottery.
 2. It was located near a field where the clay could be weathered and stored.

3. Within the house were the tools of the potter: the wheel, the kiln for firing, the hand tools, and the dump for the broken and discarded vessels.
4. The house served numerous purposes:
 - a. It covered the wheel from the elements.
 - b. It gave the potter a place to dry the clay before firing.
- B. The potter is the most important element in our discussion.
 1. He is the one who has complete control of the process of pottery making.
 2. He designs the pot to be made.
 3. He is the one who engages the clay in the molding process.
 - a. He adds the water to the clay.
 - b. He kneads the clay.
 - c. He places pressure on the clay to mold and shape it.
 - d. He watches the clay closely in the formation process.
 4. He has the ability to crush the original work and to begin anew.
 5. It is he who receives the glory and honor for the finished product.
- C. The clay is another component in the process.
 1. The clay is nothing more than earth at the beginning.
 2. The clay has no power to mold and shape itself.
 3. There must be water added to the clay to make it pliable.
 4. Oftentimes, the clay will have impurities in it that need to be purged.
 5. The clay must be placed in the center of the wheel.
 6. The clay must yield to the potter's hand.
 7. The finished product serves the potter's purpose.
 8. The finished product is beautiful, but cannot glory in itself.
 9. The clay has absolutely no control over the potter.
- D. The wheel is a forgotten aspect of the process.
 1. The wheel has a center where the clay is to be set.
 2. The wheel is in the control of the potter.
 3. The wheel needs to turn at a slow, steady rate of speed.

III. THE OBSERVATIONS.

- A. God is the potter. He is in complete control.
 1. As we picture the potter entering into his house, we understand and accept the total control that the potter has over the objects and the processes involved in pottery making.
 2. In like manner, God is in control of all things today.
 - a. He upholds "all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3).

- b. "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28)
- c. See also: Psa. 100:3; John 1:4; Col. 1:17; Rev. 4:11
3. Because man has a mind, strength, and power, he sometimes forgets the control the potter has over him. But God said unto him, "Thou fool, This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided?" (Luke 12:16-21, esp. v.20)
- B. The clay can represent numerous things that are in the hand of the potter.
 1. Nations can be represented as clay.
 - a. In the immediate context of Jeremiah 18, the nation of Israel is being considered as the clay. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. 18:6).
 - b. All powers that be are ordained of God. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).
 - c. Jesus had to remind Pilate of this fact. "Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:10-11).
 2. Churches can be represented as clay.
 - a. In the book of Revelation, Jesus is pictured walking amidst the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:13), which are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20).
 - b. In the letters to the seven churches, we learn of the power and control the Lord has over the churches. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5).
 3. Individuals can be represented as clay.
 - a. We have already seen the Lord's control over the rich farmer (Luke 12:20).
 - b. We see his control over another individual in Acts 12:21-23. "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not

God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”

- C. For clay to be useful, the impurities must be kneaded out of it by the potter.
1. There are different types of impurities that must be taken out of our lives: lust, selfishness, greed, envy, and anger. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry... But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth” (Col. 3:5,8).
 2. The potter sometimes uses different methods of pressure to force the impurities from the clay. “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth... Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless it yeildeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:6, 11).
- D. The potter decides on the type of pot he will make.
1. In the first century, there were nine spiritual gifts distributed to Christians by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (1Cor. 12:7-11; Acts 8:14-17). It was the Spirit that decided who would get which gift. But all them worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will (1Cor. 12:11).
 2. Each Christian is a member of the body of Christ. “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body; as it pleaseth him” (1Cor. 12:18).
 3. Let each member find his position and use his talents for the glory of God.
- E. To be molded, the clay must be pliable.
1. Some clay seems to have a mind of its own. For a period of time, it will allow itself to be molded, but eventually it rebels and the object crumbles and flies from the wheel.
 2. We must be pliable in the hands of God. We must choose to submit to His will in the molding process.
 - a. Jesus is our primary example. “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39; see also Heb. 5:8-9).
 - b. We, too, must submit to the Potter. “Submit yourselves therefore to God” (James 4:7).

- F. Molding clay involves a slow, steady, and progressive process.
1. If the potter tries to rush, or spins the wheel too fast, the clay will fall apart.
 2. We must develop the quality of patience and be willing to wait upon God (Psa. 62:5; Isa. 40:31).
- G. As the molding process takes place, the potter watches the clay closely with a caring eye.
1. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers..." (1 Peter 3:12a).
 2. It is both comforting and strengthening to know that God is watching all that we are experiencing as we are being molded by Him.
- H. A completed piece of pottery brings glory to the potter.
1. It is true that the pottery may be beautiful and extremely useful, but the credit and glory always goes to the potter. It is he who made it. "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psa. 100:3).
 2. All that we are, and all that we do, should be for the glory and praise of God. "That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:29-31).

CONCLUSION:

1. "But now, O Lord, Thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are the work of thy hand" (Isa. 64:8).
2. Let us remember the observations we have made about the potter and clay in this lesson.
3. As a vessel made by God, let us serve our purpose to the utmost of our ability.

QUESTIONS:

1. When we study Jeremiah 18:1-6, why is it essential for us to understand the art of pottery making?
2. What actions of the potter trouble us as we read Jeremiah 18:1-6? Why?
3. What are the four objects the potter must use in pottery making? List two qualities of each that you believe are very important.
4. How do you feel about individuals being clay in the potter's hand?

5. What are some of the impurities that need to be removed from man so he can be molded by God?
 6. What are ways a completed pot can bring glory to the potter?
-

BALAAM, THE DONKEY AND THE ANGEL

Numbers 22

Jacob Campbell

1. Of all of the “divers manners” in which God spoke in ages past, none is stranger or more compelling than the story before us.
2. We explore the meaning and significance of a dumb animal rebuking an inspired man (cf. 2 Peter 2:12-16).

DISCUSSION:

I. BACKGROUND.

- A. Forty years after departing Egypt, the children of the Israel camped east of the Jordan River near the border of the Moabite and the Amorites (Num. 21:10-13; Deut. 2:14).
- B. Two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, attacked the Israelites in the wilderness. Israel defeated them both, took their land, and left few survivors (Num. 31:21-35).
- C. The Moabites, after witnessing what Israel had done to the Amorites, became “exceedingly afraid” at the prospect of facing God’s people (Num. 22:1-3).
- D. So, Balak, king of the Moabites, sought intervention: he called for a reputable “diviner” to curse the children of Israel.

II. SUMMARY.

- A. Balak called for Balaam, the son of Beor.
 1. Balaam lived near the Euphrates (“the River”), in ancient Mesopotamia, about 400 miles from Moab.
 2. He was known – evidently even among the heathen, and by distant nations, for having the ability to bless and curse people (22:6).
 3. His legitimacy as a prophet is the subject of unending debate among Bible students.
 - a. He is called a “soothsayer” (Josh. 13:22), but this term (more often translated “diviner” in the KJV) is

- generic, and may refer to either legitimate or false prophets (cf. Isa. 3:2; Micah 3:6-7,11; etc.).
- b. He is said to have used "enchantments" (24:1); but again, in its broad usage, this word (*nachash*) means to view attentively, to inquire, to observe signs, whether by superstitious practices or legitimate means (cf. Gen. 44:5, 15).
 - c. Balaam immediately conferred with "Jehovah" (LORD), never the gods or any other source – and one time referred to "Jehovah my God" (22:18).
 - d. Peter described Balaam as "the prophet" who had "forsaken the right way and gone astray" (2 Peter 2:15,16).
 - e. Thus, we conclude in this lesson that Balaam was a legitimate prophet of God, but one who turned from the truth, as we will see.
- B. Balaam compromised his integrity for his love of money.
1. Balak first sent his nobles with a "diviner's fee" (NKJV) and the proposition to curse Israel.
 2. Balaam immediately consulted with God. Jehovah informed him that Israel was a chosen people and instructed him to refuse the Moabites' offer (22:8-13).
 3. Balaam faithfully reported these instructions to the messengers, but the king sent greater princes and more money.
 4. Balaam initially refused again, boldly proclaiming, "though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do nothing less or more" (22:18).
 5. However, he famously continued, "stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me" (22:19).
 6. God told him this second time to go with the men (22:20).
 7. So, Balaam headed for Moab, though "God's anger was aroused because he went" (22:22).
- C. The prophet was rebuked by a donkey.
1. On the way to Moab, the Angel of Jehovah stood in Balaam's path.
 - a. "The Angel of Jehovah" is elsewhere understood to be a corporeal manifestation of God Himself – the eternal Word (our Savior Jesus; cf. Exodus 3:2, 4; John 8:58).
 - b. First, the donkey strayed into a field and Balaam struck him; then it crushed him against a wall and he struck it again; finally, with the Angel completely obstructing the path, the donkey lay down and Balaam beat him with his staff (22:22-27).

2. The donkey spoke like a man and rebuked the prophet for his cruelty.
 - a. Every subsequent biblical reference to this event acknowledges this as a literal, true occurrence; it was obviously a miracle (cf. 22:28).
 - b. We are unable to detect any surprise on the part of Balaam; he proceeded to argue with the donkey.
 - c. The Angel of Jehovah revealed himself to Balaam and rebuked him for his “perversion.”
 - d. Balaam confessed his sin and continued to Moab with the professed intent of speaking only what God commanded him.
- D. Balaam earned his diviner’s reward.
 1. The prophet uttered four oracles in the presence of the king of Moab, each pronouncing a blessing rather than curse upon Israel (cc. 23-24).
 2. Thus, he failed to produce what Balak had hoped for, and gives the appearance of having repented of his earlier compromise.
 3. However, though Balaam would not blatantly prophesy lies in the name of Jehovah, he craftily counseled the king in how he could Israel: by seducing them into fornication and idolatry (25:1-3; 31:16; Rev. 2:14).
 4. The Bible writers uniformly attribute his compromise and treason to his love of money (2 Pet.2:11-15; Jude 11).

III. LESSONS AND APPLICATION.

- A. Why did God allow Balaam to go to Moab while being angry with the prophet’s decision? And, why did Jehovah perform this unusual miracle on the way?
- B. First, the record says explicitly that the Angel stood against Balaam “because [his] way was perverse” before Jehovah (22:32).
 1. “Perverse” (*yarat*): to precipitate, rush headlong, drive recklessly.
 2. Peter observes that the “dumb donkey restrained the madness of the prophet” (2 Peter 2:16).
 - a. “Madness” (*paraphronia*): literally, beside one’s mind; insane.
 - b. Balaam’s course “indicated a headstrong disposition; an acting contrary to reason and sober sense” [Barnes’ Notes (e-Sword 2010)].
 3. Balaam knew the truth; he possessed divine insight into future events; he surely knew that to oppose Israel was futile; his initial position, “the word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak” was exemplary, yet he still rebelled against God.

- a. He was "greedy" for "profit," and he "loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). He was "trained in covetous practices" (2:14).
- b. So, his love for money was stronger than his better judgment and certainly stronger than his desire to do what was right.
4. It is "crazy" that Balaam would have opposed the God who spoke with him for material gain, but he did.
5. The incident with the donkey served as an utter reproof against the lunacy of this money-loving hard-hearted man.
6. In reality, it is always futile to oppose God; it is the most absurd or "insane" course a person can pursue (Psalm 2).
 - a. How much more so when a person has received extensive knowledge of the truth?
 - b. Again, when salvation is forfeited for material gain?
7. So, it is fitting that a "dumb donkey" should rebuke this "brute beast" of a man (2 Peter 2:12,16).
- C. Perhaps, as well, the event served to remind Balaam that God was always present and an observer of his conduct.

CONCLUSION:

1. Truly, God is calling each one of us to surrender our will to Him.
2. He chastens his children, using various means to keep us safe (Heb. 12:4ff).
 - a. Some choose the course of Balaam, fighting the truth to obstinately pursue materialism and pleasure.
 - b. Others choose the course of Saul, who could no longer "kick against the pricks" and gave his life to the Savior (Acts 9).
3. Why fight the purpose of God? It can never end well (Num. 31:8; Psa. 2).

QUESTIONS

1. Why would God have commanded Balaam to proceed toward Moab if it angered Him?
 2. Does God use miraculous events to "chasten" His children today? If not, what?
 3. Discuss the significance of Balaam's saying, "That I may know what more the Lord will say to me."
 4. Witchcraft, voodoo, fortunetellers, false prophets, etc. have no real power to tell the future or curse anyone through their craft. By what other means may they still hurt the people of God? (cf. Num. 25:1-3; Rev. 2:14; Num. 31:16)
 5. Did the ancient Gentile nations live in complete absence of divine light and revelation?
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NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S HUMILIATION

Daniel 4

Larry Montgomery

1. Too often people perceive Bible narratives as “story book” material.
 - a. The causes of this perception are perhaps many:
 - 1) Children’s Bible story books — that take their “inspiration” from a Bible account and put it into a format of children’s stories likened in our mind to children’s bed time readers, Grimm’s fairy tale collections, and the endless “Golden Book” series — begin an early imprint on the minds of our children and parents alike that the Bible’s historical narratives are story book tales.
 - 2) As we “study” these “stories” over and over as children, we eventually leave the “story book world” of characters, scenes, and plots moving on to topical study of doctrine and morality which we deem worthy of “mature thinking,” thus, leaving behind the valuable object lessons of these historical accounts.
 - 3) As seen in points 1) and 2) of this section, even our language displays our mistaken perception — Bible stories, characters, narrative, drama, etc.
 - b. Such perception relegates the Bible’s historical accounts to an erroneous position of non-historical status and strips them of their God-intended purpose of being object lessons in the scheme of providing us “with all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).
2. There is a tremendous need to bring the powerful lessons of old to life today with a vividness that molds our lives into the likeness of the good while excising the ways of the wicked.
3. The bizarre event of Daniel chapter 4, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Humiliation,” is just such a lesson.

DISCUSSION:

1. **THE PLACE IN SPACE AND TIME IS BABYLON, THE OPULENT CAPITAL CITY OF THE GRAND BABYLONIAN EMPIRE AT 583 BC — IT WAS A BREEDING GROUND FOR PRIDE (Dan. 4:30-31).**
 - A. Babylon was prominent in history from the early reaches of time.
 1. The name Babel as first mentioned in the Old Testament appears to be a form closely copied from the Accadian, Bab-ilu, which means “gate of God.”¹

2. Babel, with Erech, Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar, formed part of the kingdom established by Nimrod the "mighty hunter" before the Lord (Gen. 10:10).
 3. The city was closely linked with the pride of founders, builders, rulers, inhabitants, and enemies.
- B. Babylon was at this particular time unequaled in wealth, architecture, and idolatry.
1. Extensive treasure from Babylon and conquered nations were stored in the treasure houses and palace of the king as well as the temples of pagan gods.
 2. The architecture of the city was a marvel to the ancient world with the Gate and temple of Ishtar, the Ziggurat, the temple of Ninmah and the Hanging Gardens one of the seven wonders of the ancient world as prominent samples.

II. THE PERSON IS NEBUCHADNEZZAR, MOST FAMOUS OF THE BABYLONIAN RULERS (Dan. 4:1).

- A. Nebuchadnezzar was the crowned ruler who put the crowning accomplishments on this glorious empire generally and the city of Babylon particularly.
1. Nebuchadnezzar was a great military leader expanding the Babylon kingdom by defeating the great Egyptian and Assyrian alliance including the battle of Carchemish in 605 through the expansion over Judah with the fall of Jerusalem in 587.
 2. His building of the city of Babylon was unequaled, so that S. H. Langdon writes, "Nebuchadnezzar's boast as a city builder and planner is not hollow" (Dan. 4:30).²

III. THE PRINCIPLE IS GOD'S ABILITY TO HUMILIATE THE PROUD (Dan. 4:37).

- A. The scriptures are replete with references to God's love for humility and disdain for pride — Prov. 15:33; Prov. 18:12; 1 Cor. 10:12; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6.
- B. Nebuchadnezzar is the premiere example of the fall of one who thought he stood!
1. Has there ever been one who thought he stood higher?
 - a. Consider the inscription that Nebuchadnezzar had inscribed on the edge of each block of the processional way: "I am Nebuchadrezzer [sic], king of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon. I have paved the road of Babylon with blocks of stone brought from the mountain...for the procession of the great lord Marduk. May Marduk, my lord, grant me life for ever!"³

- b. Then after being clearly warned by God through a disturbing dream finally interpreted by Daniel as a call to humility, he eventually declares, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30)
- C. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar brought the crushing blow promised to him by God.
 - 1. While the words were on his lips, a voice from heaven pronounced that his kingdom was departed from him and he would live as a beast in the field “until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan. 4:32).
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar became a beast.
 - a. Some have postulated that the change in Nebuchadnezzar was due to some natural cause from some form of skin disease, to forms of insanity (e.g. lycanthropy), to advanced stages of syphilis.
 - b. Such is foreign to faith and the Biblical account:
 - 1) God changed him from within giving, him “the heart of a beast” (Dan. 4:16), which Franklin Camp declared is “What happens to men whenever they refuse to recognize God, accept divine revelation, and be guided by the principles that are found therein.”⁴ cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Isa. 1:2ff; Phil. 3:1,2; Gal. 5:15
 - 2) The changed heart led to changed actions as is always the case and he became a beast for seven years with the result being hair like feathers and claws like eagles.

CONCLUSION:

1. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar can happen to me!
 - a. Be literally changed into a beast? No.
 - b. Be brought down if I exalt myself? Absolutely.
2. We must not look to acquired wealth, power or fame and say, “See what I have done!”
3. In our service to God in Christ, we must not seek or accept glory for ourselves because the glory belongs to God (Matt. 5; 1 Cor. 10:31)

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. What factors caused the humiliating experience of Nebuchadnezzar?
2. What worldly things contribute to puffing us up with pride?
3. Is it possible to be filled with destructive pride in Spiritual things?

4. What can we do to resist pride in worldly things?
5. What can we do to maintain humility in our service to God?

ENDNOTES

¹Andre Parrot, *Babylon and the Old Testament*, trans B. E. Hooke (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956) 68-69.

²"Nebuchadnezzar." *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975) Vol. 4, p.398.

³Parrot, p.36

⁴Franklin Camp, *Redemption Through the Bible: Daniel*, Recorded lectures on DVD (Brother's Inc: Adamsville, AL).

FOOT WASHING IN THE FACE OF GLORY

John 13

Kenneth Burleson

1. Object lessons were used throughout the Bible to teach great lessons.
2. This is true regarding our text today.
3. The Lord used an object lesson to teach His disciples a great lesson in humility.
4. The disciples were in need of this lesson because they were not showing any humility by their disputing over who is greatest in the Kingdom.
5. This lesson in humility is just as applicable today.
Not in the way it was demonstrated.

DISCUSSION:

1. THE LORD LOVED HIS DISCIPLES. vs.1,2

A. The scene of this lesson is the passover.

B. The Lord knew that His departure would be soon. v.1

C. He loved His disciples to the end.

1. The Lord's love for His disciples would not end with His departure from the earth. They would continue in the world and His love would continue with them.

2. The love of Christ is limitless.

Though He knew that Judas would betray Him, yet, His love for Him did not cease.

D. Christ expressed His love to the uttermost.

- E. In the face of glory. The inner glorification of Christ was demonstrated before those who believed and received Him.
- F. They saw His life that He was the light of the world. John 8:12
- G. They saw His love and sacrifice.
- H. He is the embodiment of truth and love. The Lord did not hesitate to show His love in many ways.
- I. The inner glorification is shown by the example He set for the disciples.
- J. The Lord's idea of greatness is opposite to that of mankind.

II. HUMILITY WAS TAUGHT BY THE LORD TO HIS DISCIPLES WHILE WASHING THEIR FEET. vs.3-11

- A. The washing of the feet of others was practiced long before the occasion of our lesson today.
 - 1. It was included in the hospitality of Abraham. Gen. 18:4
 - 2. Abigail offered to wash the feet of David's servants. 1 Sam. 25:41
- B. There are many Old Testament examples of washing of feet. Gen. 18:4; 24:32; Exodus 30:19-21; 40:31; Judges 19:21 more
- C. The need for this object lesson in humility, was because the disciples desired chief positions in the Kingdom. To be great was not as they supposed.
 - 1. The disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" Matt. 18:1
 - a. Jesus set a child in the midst of them. Matt. 18:2
 - b. The one, who humbles himself as a child is greatest in the Kingdom. Matt. 18:3
 - c. Jesus asked, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" Mark 9:33
It was, "Who should be the greatest."
 - 2. The mother of James and John, asked that her sons be placed, one on the right hand of the Lord and the other on the left, in the Kingdom. Matt. 20:21
 - a. According to Matt. 20:24 the other disciples, "were moved with indignation against the two brethren."
 - b. The Lord's answer: "...whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant." Matt. 20:26. Jesus said, "...whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Matt. 20:27
 - 3. The Lord is an example according to Matt. 20:28.
- D. Jesus washes their feet. v.5
 - 1. Feet were usually washed when they entered the house.
 - 2. The disciples were not willing to wash the feet of others.
 - 3. Feet were washed because they were dirty.
 - 4. Jesus laid aside His garments and girded Himself.
 - a. Jesus knew His greatness, He is master.

- b. He became a servant. Phil. 2:7
 - c. The King of kings and Lord of lords, yet, He performed the menial task!
- E. Peter asked, "...Lord dost thou wash my feet?" v.6
1. The Lord replies, "...What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." v.7
 - a. The washing of their feet was not the full design of the Lord's act.
 - b. It was an object lesson to cause the disciples to realize their pride and worldly ambition in seeking to be considered the greatest in the Kingdom.
 - c. The Lord wanted them to replace all their ambitions with humility and service.
 2. Peter responded, "...Thou shalt never wash my feet..." v.8
 3. Jesus rebuked Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou has no part with me." v.8
 - a. You will not have any part in the work nor in His coming Kingdom and the blessings of being faithful.
 4. Peter said, "...Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." v.9
 - a. This shows Peter's change in disposition.
 - b. He still did not understand that the Lord was teaching them against a proud and arrogant disposition. The lesson he needed to learn was humility.
 5. Jesus said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." v.10
 - a. If one has had a bath, only his feet need washing after walking in the dirt, wearing the type of shoes worn then.
 - b. The lesson has spiritual application.
 6. Jesus said, "Ye are not all clean." v.11
 - a. He knew that one would betray Him.
 - b. This would be Judas.

III. JESUS EXPLAINS THE WASHING OF THEIR FEET.

- A. Jesus asked them, do you know what I have done? v.12
- B. They called Him teacher and Lord. This was right. If I have washed your feet, ye ought to wash one another's feet. vs.13,14
- C. The Lord had given them an example they should follow. v.15
 1. It was an example, not an ordinance. It was an example of humility.
 2. He washed their feet to cleanse them because they were dirty, not clean feet as a ceremony.

3. It was an example of service. This is God's measure of true greatness.
- D. "...The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." v.16
 1. They should have been willing to do what He did.
 2. Jesus taught them an object lesson.
 3. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve.
 4. We should be willing to follow His example in service.
- E. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." v.17
 1. We honor Him by doing His will. Matt. 7:21; James 1:22
 2. We dishonor our Lord by not doing His will.
- F. The Lord prepares for His betrayal. v.18-30
 1. He said, "the scripture may be fulfilled."
 2. He declared, "That one of you shall betray me."
 3. The one that eats bread with me, is the one.
- G. All of these things we have studied thus far, lead to the glorifying of the Father and the Son. vs.31,32
 1. While Judas was seeking to betray the Lord, the Father and the Son were being glorified (made to appear glorious).
 2. All the events prior to the cross and after the cross served to glorify the Father and the Son.

IV. APPLICATION.

- A. This was not the beginning of a religious ordinance.
 1. It was an example, not an ordinance.
 2. If it is binding on us in worship because Jesus did it, so would be the observance of the passover.
 3. The early Christians practiced the partaking of the Lord's Supper in worship, but nothing is mentioned of washing of feet in the worship of the church. Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11
 4. Feet washing was later practiced in the home. 1 Tim. 5:10.
- B. The need for humility. vs.12-15
 1. James 4:6; Phil. 2:5; Rom. 12:16
 2. Beware of a false pride in humility!
- C. To make us understand the proper view of true greatness and service. vs.16,17
 1. The Lord measures greatness by service. Matt. 23:7-12
 - a. To be Christ-like. Matt. 20:28
 - b. What about religious robes and titles?
 2. The church, today, should be viewed as AN AVENUE OF SERVICE TO OTHERS.
 - a. The happy ones are the ones who serve others. v.17
 - b. Too many are miserable and sad because they want to be served.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus taught a great lesson on humility by service.
2. But, if it falls on deaf ears it will not serve the purpose.
3. A good question for each of us, "am I humble?"
4. May God bless us, as we "humble ourselves in His sight."

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of humility?
 2. How can one show his humility without washing another's feet?
 3. When were the Father and Son glorified?
 4. Is humility a prerequisite to eternal salvation? Prove your answer.
 5. Give the occasions where Peter spoke before he thought, and what were the results?
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THE YOKE OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 27

J. Bryant Evans

1. Common illustrations are frequently used by the God of Heaven to teach new lessons and to reinforce old lessons that have been forgotten. Like a master preacher, the Lord uses a common and well known farming object to remind mankind of his own power and might.
2. In Jeremiah 27 and 28, the prophet is instructed to make use of a yoke. It's appearance would remind the prophet's hearers of God's might and his commands.
3. If we will listen closely and observe Jeremiah and his contemporaries, we too will learn the lessons from Jeremiah's yoke.
4. Background
 - a. Emissaries from the near east have gathered in Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar rules the powerful Babylonian Empire and has subdued the kingdoms of Jeremiah (27:3). These nations, including Judah, were now vassal states of Babylon. They were allowed to remain in their homes so long as they were obedient to the empire and continued to send tribute to Nebuchadnezzar (c.f. 2 Kings 24:1).
 - b. The Bible gives no clear reason why these dignitaries were visiting Jerusalem. Some scholars suggest a confederation was forming to cast off the heavy hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Such a suggestion has some merit, as it would explain the

reason for the message that God sends those nations through Jeremiah.

- c. It is critical to understand that the oppression of Babylon was neither coincidence nor happenstance. Judah was being punished for its own wickedness and Babylon was the chastening rod (Jer. 1:15-16; 25:8-14; 43:10). Judah should have learned from the transgressions and punishments of their northern brethren, but they did not.
- d. The people find themselves under the wrath and punishment of God. As they seek to free themselves from oppression, they discover several vital lessons from Jeremiah's yoke.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE YOKE OF JEREMIAH TEACHES THAT GOD ALONE IS THE MASTER.

- A. Just as oxen have no control of whether or when they are yoked, men have no control over God's decisions.
 1. "His ways" are always best. Psalm 10:5; Psalm 18:10; Psalm 128:1; Psalm 145:17; Prov. 19:6, Isa. 2:3
 2. "His ways" are beyond ours and certainly far beyond the questioning of mankind. While man may seek earthly wisdom, such a task is doomed to failure. Isa. 55:8-9; Daniel 4:35; Isa. 29:14; 1 Cor. 1:19; 1 Cor. 3:19
 3. It is not just that God is greater; man is incapable of directing his own steps apart from God. Just as a team of oxen could never plow a field without the direction of the farmer, a man cannot maneuver through life without God's direction. Jer. 10:23; Prov. 20:24
- B. The yoke is a symbol of submission. The yoke is placed upon an animal to cause it to submit.
 1. Although the people of Judah knew God's will, they resisted his authority.
 - a. Israel/Judah had a long history of faithlessness and had often resisted and even rebelled against God.
 - b. Judah witnessed the rebellion and destruction of their northern brothers. One would think that such a massive object lesson would not be lost upon them. But it had been.
 2. The people were going to submit. Their only question was the force God would use to compel their obedience. Jer. 27:8
 - a. The acceptance of the false prophet's words (Hananiah), resulted in a stronger yoke being applied to the nation. (Jer. 28:14)
 - b. We should remember that the victory is found in Christ (1 Cor. 15:57) to whom "every knee shall bow" (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10).

II. THE YOKE OF JEREMIAH TEACHES THAT GOD'S PLANS CANNOT BE BROKEN.

- A. Subjugation to Babylon was God's plan.
 - 1. God's intents were clear — Babylon would rule over Judah for 70 years (Jer. 25:8-14).
 - 2. Indeed, Judah was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and served 70 years. 2 Chron. 26:21; Daniel 9:2
- B. God rules over the affairs of men and cannot be resisted. Jer. 27:5; Daniel 4:17,25,32; Prov. 21:1
- C. It was a profound error to even attempt to resist God's plans. While the people sought to take advantage of Nebuchadnezzar's distractions, no such distractions exist for Jehovah God.

III. THE YOKE OF JEREMIAH TEACHES GOD'S FORBEARANCE.

- A. Animals were never yoked continually. There was a time of release.
- B. God had already made clear Judah's bondage would be temporary (Jer. 25:8-14).
- C. The Lord had no desire to destroy the nation, for it was through Judah that Christ would come (Matt. 1:2,3).
- D. Today, like Judah before, God often chastens us. 1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:5-11
- E. Indeed, God is longsuffering towards us (2 Peter 3:9) and has extended a Father's hand toward us.

IV. WE SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK THE FALSE PROPHET WHO CONTENDED AGAINST THE YOKE OF JEREMIAH.

- A. Hananiah was evidently a respected prophet known among the people and the priests (Jer. 28:1). For some inexplicable reason, he spoke falsely concerning Babylon and he spoke specifically and demonstratively against Jeremiah and his yoke. One cannot rule out the possibility that Hananiah sought to speak easy words to the people thus improving his own popularity at the expense of truth (2 Tim. 4:3,4).
- B. Hananiah attempted to change God's plans and obstruct his ways (Jer. 28:2-11).
- C. The penalty for falsely prophesying was death (Deut. 18:20). As part of the rebuke from God, Jeremiah announced that Hananiah would die. He did die within the year and no further words were heard from him (Jer. 28:16-17).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. God gave Jeremiah a powerful illustration to use before the people of Judah.

2. The Yoke of Jeremiah represents God's power and might, our necessary submission to His will and the unchangeable nature of His will.
3. A powerful example of how God views the false teacher is also a part of this passage.
4. May God richly bless those who come to his Word to learn and apply His will for our lives.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of a yoke and how does that purpose apply to Jeremiah's situation?
 2. What did the dignitaries or emissaries in Jerusalem all have in common?
 3. According to the Old Testament, what was the penalty for a prophet who spoke untruthfully?
 4. Why do you think Hananiah uttered a false prophecy? What could have been his motive?
 5. Is there a lesson in Jeremiah's yoke for God's people today?
-

SPIT, MUD, AND BLINDNESS

John 9

Jimmy W. Bates

1. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (John 9:1).
 - a. Commentators differ on the time of this event, but it seems likely that the events recorded in John 8 and 9 took place on the same (sabbath) day in the city of Jerusalem.
 - b. Chapter 8 ends with the Jews seeking to stone Jesus, but He hid himself and left the temple "going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (8:59).
 - c. Chapter 9 begins, "And as Jesus passed by..." (v.1).
2. Jesus miraculously gave sight to a man born blind (John 9:6,7).
 - a. Jesus healed others that were blind, but this is the only case of one born blind.
 - b. The miracles of Jesus: 1) proved his deity (9:22,23), 2) proved him to be the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5), 3) produced faith in him as the Son of God (John 20:30,31).
 - c. John 9 shows the growing opposition of the Pharisees to the Messiahship of Jesus Christ.

3. Our study begins with physical blindness and ends with spiritual blindness, which is a far more serious and prominent problem among men even today!

DISCUSSION:

- I. **THE MISCONCEPTION: (9:2-5).** "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v.2)
- A. It was commonly believed among the Jews that all human suffering and calamity resulted from sin, either personal or parental (Job 4:5-9; Luke 13:2-5).
- B. "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents..." (v.3a).
1. Jesus was not saying that sin is never the cause of affliction (John 5:14).
 - a. In a general sense, sin is the cause of human suffering (Gen. 3).
 - b. Some suffering is caused by one's own sins (Prov. 13:15), as well as the sins of others. Consider the result of alcohol and other drug abuse, etc.
 - c. Children sometimes suffer as the result of the sins of parents (Exodus 20:5,6).
 2. Jesus was simply affirming that this man's blindness from birth was not caused by either his, nor his parents sin.
- C. "But that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (v.3b).
1. Jesus would use this man's affliction to manifest the works of God (vs.3-5).
 - a. Jesus came to do the Father's work (John 4:34; 17:4).
 - b. His miraculous works bear witness of him (John 5:36; 11:4; 20:30,31).
 2. The work of God is URGENT! (v.4).
- D. Jesus — "the light of the world" (v.5).
1. Jesus is the true light of all men (John 1:4,9).
 - a. Light enables men to "see" and "guides" them in the right direction.
 - b. The followers of Christ "shall not walk in darkness;" but they "shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).
 2. Giving sight to the blind man was an illustration of the work which Jesus was continually doing as the light of the world!
- II. **THE HEALING: (vs.6-12)** "How were thine eyes opened?" (v.10)
- A. It was a Miraculous Healing (vs.6,7).
1. The means used: spit, mud (clay), pool of Siloam!

- a. There was no power in these to heal blindness; just as there was no power in the waters of Jordan to heal leprosy (2 Kings 5).
- b. Through this means, Christ manifested his power.
 - 1) As the “Bread of Life” he fed the 5,000 (John 6).
 - 2) As the “Resurrection and the Life” he raised Lazarus (John 11).
 - 3) As the “Light of the World” he healed a man born blind (John 9).
2. “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” — a test of his faith!
 - a. God requires “obedient faith” on the part of one who would be healed physically or spiritually:
 - 1) Naaman (2 Kings 5),
 - 2) Brazen serpent (Num. 21),
 - 3) Cornelius (Acts 22:16).
 - b. A “saving faith” is an “obedient faith” (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:8,9; 2 Thess. 1:8,9). Faith must work (John 6:28,29; Gal. 5:6; James 2:14-26).
 - c. The blind man “went...and washed, and came seeing.”
- B. The reaction of the Neighbors (vs.8-10).

III. THE PHARISEES HOLD A HEARING: (vs.13-23) “How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?” (v.16)

- A. The healed man is questioned: “how he had received his sight” (vs.15-17).
 1. There was division among the Pharisees (v.16).
 - a. Because the man was healed on the Sabbath day (v.14), some accused Jesus of not keeping the Sabbath day and was therefore not of God.
 - b. Others admitted, “how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles.”
 2. When asked what he thought of Jesus, the healed man said, “He is a prophet” (v.17), which would imply that he is from God!
- B. The parents of the healed man are questioned (vs.18-23).
 1. The Pharisees, in their effort to deny the miracle, asked the parents three questions:
 - a. Is this your son?
 - b. Was he born blind?
 - c. How does he now see?
 2. The parents answered the first two questions: We know he’s our son, and he was born blind (v.20). As to how and who healed him, they would not say for fear of being put out of the synagogue. Their response was “we know not... he is of age; ask him” (vs.21-23).
 - a. Reminds us of the chief rulers (John 12:42,43).

- b. In contrast, the man born blind who can now see because of the compassion and power of Jesus, stood firm with Jesus, even though he was put out of the synagogue.

IV. THE HEALED MAN REVILED AND CAST OUT BY THE PHARISEES: (vs.24-34). "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" (v.34)

A. The second interrogation of the healed man:

1. Told by the Pharisees to "Give God the praise" (v.24)
 - a. This phrase seems to have been used as an oath, binding one to tell the truth (Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 6:5).
 - b. Not for healing him, because the Pharisees deny the miracle.
 - c. They're trying to force him to "give God the praise" by admitting and confessing that his claim to be healed of his blindness is a falsehood and thus reject Christ!
2. Pharisees said, "we know that this man is a sinner" (v.24b).
 - a. The proof they offered was that Jesus had healed this man on the Sabbath day (vs.14,16).
 - b. They admit the miracle Jesus performed and then they deny it!

B. The healed man wavers not as he engages in debate with the Pharisees (vs.25-34).

1. "I was blind, now I see" (v.25). Pharisees asked, "how opened he thine eyes?" (v.26). He had already told them how Jesus healed him (v.15), but they would not hear it. Would they now accept it and become disciples of Christ? (v.27)
 - a. No! They "reviled" (means to reproach, vilify—Strong) him (v.28), seeking to pit Christ against Moses.
 - b. They claimed to be disciples of Moses and yet they rejected Christ of whom Moses spake (John 5:45-47; Luke 24:27,44-45; Acts 3:22,23).
2. They again denied Christ was from God (v.29).
 - a. Such ignorance was amazing to the healed man (v.30).
 - b. He presents a logical argument that:
 - 1) "God heareth not sinners:" (v.31),
 - 2) Jesus did something that had never been done before: gave sight to one who was born blind (v.32),
 - 3) If Jesus was not from God, he could not have done this miracle (v.33).
3. They couldn't answer his argument, so they continued to "revile" him (v.34).

- a. “Thou wast altogether born in sins,” implying that his blindness at birth was the result of his, or his parents sins, or both!
 - b. “And they cast him out” – put him out of the synagogue (v.2).
- C. After all their interrogations and denials, they failed to disprove the miracle that Jesus performed in giving sight to a man born blind!

V. THE PROGRESSION OF FAITH: (9:35-38). “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”(v.35)

- A. Jesus sought and found the healed man whom the Pharisees had cast out (v.35).
 - 1. Jesus doesn’t forsake the persecuted (Matt. 5:10-12; Heb. 13:5,6).
 - 2. He promises to be with us (Matt. 28:20).
- B. Jesus helps him grow in faith: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” (v.35)
 - 1. He believes Jesus miraculously gave him sight (v.11).
 - 2. He believes Jesus to be a prophet from God (vs.17,33).
 - 3. Now he is called upon them believe that Jesus is Deity, the Son of God, the Messiah spoken of by the prophets.
 - 4. “Who is he, Lord that I might believe on him?” (v.36)
 - a. He had not associated Jesus, who had healed him, with the Messiah, the Son of God.
 - b. But he was ready and willing to believe on him when he was identified.
 - 5. Jesus, then identified himself to him as the Son of God (v.37).
- C. “And he said, Lord, I believe...” (v.38).
 - 1. He then demonstrated his faith — “he worshiped him.”
 - 2. All today who desire to become Christians (followers of Christ) must confess faith in Him as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9,10), and demonstrate that faith in a life of faithfulness to Him (Matt. 10:32,33; Rom. 12:1,2; Rev. 2:10).
 - 3. The Lord expects and desires that his followers continually grow in grace, knowledge, and faith (2 Peter 3:18; 2 Cor. 10:15).

VI. SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS: (9:39-41). “Are we blind also?” (v.40)

- A. The effect of Jesus’ coming (v.39).
 - 1. “That they which see not might see;”
 - a. That those in the spiritual darkness of sin might come to the light of truth and see spiritually (John 1:4-9; 3:16-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46; Col. 1:12-14).

- b. As the result of the coming of Christ, the man born blind came to see physically and spiritually (John 9:7, 35-38).
 - 2. "That they which see might be made blind."
 - a. The self-righteous "know-it-all" who ignorantly reject the light of Christ and through spiritual blindness choose to remain in darkness.
 - b. Such were the Pharisees as described here in John 9.
- B. "Are we blind also" (v.40).
 - 1. The Pharisees perceived that Jesus spoke of them (cf. Matt. 23:23, 24).
 - 2. "If ye were blind..." (v.41). Jesus points out the difference in "spiritual blindness" for lack of opportunity having not yet been lead to the light of truth and the "willful blindness" of those who reject the light of truth.
 - a. The former (characteristic of the blind man), given the opportunity would readily come out of the darkness of sin and come to the light of truth and thus would not remain in sin.
 - b. The latter (characteristic of the Pharisees), who refuse to recognize their spiritual blindness and who reject the light of truth, wilfully choose to remain in the darkness of sin.
- C. The Danger of WILFUL SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS:
 - 1. Satan seeks to blind the minds of men from the light of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:1-4)
 - 2. All must develop the proper attitude toward truth and a determination to do the will of God (John 7:17; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; Eph. 5:17; Prov. 28:5; 1:5; Col. 1:9).
 - 3. Many refuse to "hear", "see", or "understand" (Matt. 13:13-15; Heb. 5:11; 1 Tim. 4:1,2; 2 Peter 3:3-5).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. There are many valuable lessons to be learned from the account of Jesus giving sight to the man born blind and the different characters involved.
 - a. From Jesus, we learn what a kind and compassionate friend and Savior he is and the spiritual healing he offers to mankind as the light of the world.
 - b. From his disciples we learn the danger of misconceptions and accepting teachings that are not based on truth.
 - c. From the blind man we learn the importance and blessings of a submissive and growing faith and the courage to stand for truth in opposition to the enemies of Christ.
 - d. From the blind man's parents we learn the danger of weak faith and the fear it produces.

- e. From the Pharisees we learn the destructive nature of hatred, malice, self-righteousness, etc. that willful spiritual blindness will produce.

QUESTIONS

1. "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:1)
 2. "How were thine eyes opened?" (John 9:10)
 3. "Are we blind also?" (John 9:40)
 4. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35)
 5. "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" (John 9:36)
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PURSE, SCRIP, AND SWORD

Luke 22

Jeff Bates

1. Please read Luke 22:35-38.
2. Consider the context; the events leading up to the discussion of our text between Jesus and his apostles.
 - a. Jesus observed the Passover with his apostles. Luke 22:7-16
 - b. Jesus instituted the Lord's supper. Luke 22:17-20
 - c. Jesus foretold he would be betrayed by one of the apostles. Luke 22:21-23
 - d. Because the apostles disputed over which of them would be greatest in Jesus' kingdom, Jesus contrasted his kingdom, which would be spiritual in nature, to the physical kingdoms of the world. Luke 22:24-30
 - e. Jesus foretold of Peter's denial of him. Luke 22:31-34
3. Let us define key words from our text.
 - a. "Purse" (KJV) is translated "money bag" (NKJV). It was "a pouch for money."¹
 - b. "Scrip" (KJV) is translated "knapsack" (NKJV). It was "a leather pouch for food."¹
 - c. What can we learn from this text?

DISCUSSION:

- I. **WHEN HAD JESUS SENT THE APOSTLES WITHOUT PURSE, SCRIP, OR SWORD? LUKE 22:35**
 - A. Please read Luke 9:1-6.
 - B. "...He sent them to preach the kingdom of God." Luke 9:2

1. John, the forerunner of Jesus, preached the kingdom was soon to be established. Matt. 3:2
 2. Jesus had also preached the kingdom was soon to be established. Matt. 4:17
 3. In fact, the kingdom was to be established during the lifetime of many of Jesus' hearers. Mark 9:1
 4. He now sends his apostles to preach the kingdom of God.
 5. The kingdom was indeed established, as was preached by John, Jesus, and Jesus' apostles. The Colossian Christians, as were all others, were "translated into the kingdom." Col. 1:13
- C. He also sent them "to heal the sick" (Luke 9:2). These miracles, which could be done only by the power of God, confirmed to the hearers that the message preached by the apostles was indeed from God. Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3,4
- D. Why did Jesus tell the apostles to take with them neither money nor provisions? Luke 9:3
1. On this occasion Jesus sent them only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." They were not to go to Gentiles (Matt. 10:5,6). For this reason it is sometimes referred to as Jesus' limited commission of his apostles.
 2. The Jews were expected to accept the preaching of the kingdom, and to fully provide for and support God's messengers, the apostles. Matt. 10:9,10
 3. Why did God expect this of the Jews? He expected it because he had given to them the law of Moses and the prophets, which pointed them to the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. Gal. 3:24
- E. The apostles confirmed that in carrying out the "limited commission," they lacked nothing in provisions. They were indeed supported by their Jewish brethren. Luke 22:35

II. AS JESUS SENT OUT HIS APOSTLES IN OUR PRESENT TEXT, THEY WERE TOLD TO TAKE MONEY, PROVISIONS, AND EVEN A SWORD. Luke 22:36

- A. The circumstances had changed. The apostles were now being sent "to all nations" (Luke 24:47; Matt. 28:19) — to every individual of every nation (Mark 16:15). This is referred to as "the great commission."
- B. God's plan was that the Gospel would be taken first to Israel, and then to the rest of the world. Luke 24:47; Acts 3:25,26; 13:46
- C. As they fulfilled the great commission, the apostles would need provisions.
 1. There were occasions when an apostle would be financially supported by congregations of the Lord's

- church as he preached the Gospel in other places. 1 Cor. 9:3-14; 2 Cor. 11:8,9; Phil. 4:14-16
2. There were also occasions when an apostle had to provide for himself the necessities of life. 1 Cor. 4:9-13
- D. Jesus would be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Luke 22:37; Isa. 53:12
1. Jesus' was "reckoned among the transgressors" when he was nailed to the cross of Calvary.
 2. Jesus died, not for any wrong which he had done, but for our sins. 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4
 - a. We earn death as a consequence of our sin. Rom. 6:23
 - b. Jesus is the propitiation for our sins, meaning that he died in our stead. 1 John 2:2; 4:10
 3. Jesus' servants should expect to be rejected and persecuted, even as our Lord was. John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12
- E. Telling the apostles they would need a sword, Jesus prepared them for the dangers/persecutions they would face as they preached the Gospel. Luke 22:36
1. However, the kingdom of God was not to be advanced throughout the world by the use of a physical sword. John 18:10,11; Matt. 26:51-54
 2. Jesus' kingdom was to be spread by the use of the "sword of the Spirit" which is the word of God, thus by the preaching of the Gospel. Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12
 3. This was just one way in which Jesus' kingdom was contrasted with a physical, worldly kingdom.

III. WHAT APPLICATIONS CAN BE MADE TO OUR OWN LIVES?

- A. Christians have the God-given obligation/responsibility to preach the Gospel to the lost; every individual in every nation. Jesus instructed the apostles "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Thus, Christians are to be taught to teach others, even as the apostles were to teach.
- B. Christians ought to financially support preachers in the preaching of the Gospel, individually and/or congregationally. 1 Cor. 9:14
- C. We must all be prepared for the persecutions that will come to those who live the Christian life, and teach the Gospel to others. Those persecutions must not hinder us from our obligation/responsibility. 2 Tim. 3:12
 1. The apostles fulfilled their mission in a marvelous way. Even facing imprisonment and death, they worked feverishly to fulfill their mission.
 2. Do we realize the great debt we owe to the apostles?

3. If I, as a Christian do not take the saving Gospel to a lost and dying world, who will?
4. Even one man willing to go and preach, but not able to raise financial support, is a sad commentary on many congregations of the Lord's people today.
5. Are you teaching? Are you financially supporting those who preach the Gospel?

¹Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words, by James Strong

QUESTIONS

1. On one occasion, Jesus sent his apostles without provisions to go and preach the Gospel. Why, on another occasion did he instruct the apostles to take provisions?
 2. John, Jesus, and Jesus' apostles all preached the kingdom of God. Can it be true, as many denominations teach, that the kingdom of God still has not been established, but will be established when Jesus comes again?
 3. Does every Christian have a God-given obligation/responsibility to teach the Gospel?
 4. Does every Christian have a God-given obligation/responsibility to financially support preachers of the Gospel?
 5. If I encounter no persecution in my Christian life, is there reason to question my faithfulness?
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PETER'S TRANCE

Acts 10

Larry Acuff

1. This is a great message on salvation (Acts 10).
 - a. In Acts eight, nine and ten, we have three conversions recorded.
 - 1) In chapter eight we have the conversion of the Eunuch.
 - 2) In chapter nine we have the conversion of Saul.
 - 3) In chapter ten we have the conversion of Cornelius.
 - b. There are four things common to each of these conversions.
 - 1) Every man had a hunger for salvation.
 - 2) Every man had the same heartache of sin.
 - 3) Every man had the same hope, which is Christ.
 - 4) Every man had the same help: Someone taught the Gospel.

- c. In each of these conversions there was guidance from God.
 - 1) The Eunuch — “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8:29).
 - 2) Saul — “And hath seen in a vision” (Acts 9:12).
 - 3) Cornelius — saw a vision and Peter fell into a trance (Acts 10).
2. It is Peter’s trance upon which this lecture will focus.

DISCUSSION:

- I. **TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE TRANCE, WE MUST REVIEW PETER’S SERMON ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST (Acts 2).**
 - A. Peter declares: “For the promise is to you, and your children, and to all that afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:39).
 - B. Twenty years later, Peter was still not convinced of this because Paul withstood him to his face (Gal. 2:11).
- II. **TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THIS TRANCE, WE MUST KNOW THERE WERE RESTRICTIONS UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW.**
 - A. They were forbidden to eat certain foods under the Old Testament Law.
 1. The law declared, “Nevertheless these shall ye not eat” (Lev. 11:4).
 2. Regarding things in the water, the law said, “All that have not fins and scales in the seas” (Lev. 11:10).
 3. The law restricted them from eating certain flying animals (Lev. 11:13-28).
 4. The law also dealt with creeping things (Lev. 11:29-31).
 - B. The Jews were restricted in what they touched which would have been significant to Peter at Simon the tanner’s house (Lev. 11:28; Acts 10:6).
- III. **TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE TRANCE, IT IS NECESSARY TO LOOK AT THE DETAILS INVOLVED.**
 - A. The word “trance” comes from the Greek word *ekstasi* which denotes “A condition in which ordinary consciousness and the perception of natural circumstances were withheld and the soul was susceptible only to the vision imparted by God.”
 1. The sheet consisted of things forbidden under OT Law (Acts 10:12).
 2. “And there came a voice to him Rise Peter; kill and eat” (Acts 10:13). It was done three times.
 - B. Peter’s response was a natural one seeing he grew up under the Old Testament Law.

1. "Not so, Lord for I have never eaten anything common or unclean" (Acts 10:14).
2. This was not the first time Peter said no to the Lord.
 - a. When Jesus told the Apostles he must go to Jerusalem and suffer, Peter rebuked him (Matt. 16:22).
 - b. Peter said no to the Lord when Jesus wanted to wash his feet (John 13:8).
3. Peter may have learned something because he called the men, whom Cornelius had sent, into the house to lodge (Acts 10:23).
4. "By this one act, Peter swept aside the prejudices of a lifetime, letting in the fresh air of the kingdom of heaven."

IV. FROM BETTER UNDERSTANDING THIS TRANCE, WE LEARN THE FOLLOWING LESSONS.

- A. The trance teaches that the Old Testament Law has been abolished (Col. 2:14).
- B. The trance teaches that with God, there is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11).
- C. The trance teaches that God will shake us out of our inconsistencies by His Providence (Luke 22:54-62).
- D. This trance teaches that repetition is effective (Acts 10:16; 2 Peter 3:1; Phil. 3:18).
- E. This trance teaches that things happen when we pray (Acts 10,12; I Kings 18).
- F. This trances teaches not to reject something because we are unfamiliar with it. This is not referring to new doctrine, but accepting Bible doctrine.

QUESTIONS

1. Since God does not communicate to us today through visions, a trance or miracles, how does He communicate?
 2. What was the major lesson God wanted Peter to learn?
 3. What is significant about the fact that the angel instructed Cornelius to send for Peter?
 4. What was the long-term message for the church from Peter's trance?
 5. When we are confronted by the Word of God with something that needs to be done, yet it is new or different to what we have been doing, how should we handle it?
-

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Matt. 17, Mark 9, Luke 9

Tom House

1. The Bible student is aware of numerous events recorded in scripture which are of significant intrigue.
2. Perhaps, among the wondrous events noted in the New Testament, none are of any greater intrigue than that of the transfiguration of Jesus.
3. Three of the four Gospel accounts provide inspired documentary of the occasion, with John being the exception.
 - a. It is interesting to note that John did not include this event in his narrative, considering he was one of the three eyewitnesses; unless one includes his brief reference in John 1:14.
 - b. Otherwise, the only eyewitness to record the transfiguration was the apostle Peter. (2 Peter 1:16-18)
4. When speaking of the transfiguration, some wonder what is meant by the term.
 - a. The word used by Matthew and Mark is the Greek word *metamorphoo*; which is defined 'to transform or change;' and is a term from which is derived the English word 'metamorphosis.'
 - b. Luke employs a different word *heteros*; which is defined as something different or something strange – as something other than the norm.
5. While the event is certainly remarkable and intriguing, it is not unique in Bible history when in reference to Christ.
 - a. The occasion of the three who visited Abraham at Mamre in Genesis 18 is one of the several events when Jesus appeared in human form prior to His physical birth.
 - b. It is also generally believed that it was the Lord who joined Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they were cast into the fiery furnace. (Dan. 4:25ff)
 - c. Another such metamorphosis occurred when the Lord appeared to the men of Emmaus in 'another form.' (*morphe*, shape) (Mark 16:12).
6. As the process of metamorphosis was not necessarily unique to Christ, it is little wonder why Peter would recall the event in his epistle and reference it as the Lord's majesty. (*megaleiotes*, glory or splendor, magnificence)

DISCUSSION:**I. THE SETTING OF THE EVENT.**

- A. While in Galilee, after Jesus fed the multitude with seven loaves and a few small fish, He would go by ship to Magdala. (Matt. 15:39)
- B. He and His disciples later departed for the 'other side.' (Matt. 16:5).
- C. Eventually, He would make His way to the coast of Caesarea Philippi; which would seem to be the northeastern shores of the Sea of Galilee; and it would be here that Peter would make the great confession. (Matt. 16:13-20)
 1. Matthew and Mark both state that six days later the transfiguration occurred. (Matt. 17:1-2; Mark 9:2)
 2. Luke, however, says it was 'eight days.' (Luke 9:28-29)
 3. Luke is evidently including the day of the confession and the day they went up the mountain.
 4. Matthew and Mark therefore, are only counting the intervening period from the confession to the day they began to climb the mountain.
- D. It is considered by some that the mountain the Lord took the disciples was Mt. Hermon.
 1. It is described as a 'high mountain;' and Mt. Hermon would certainly fit the description.
 2. It is the highest mountain in the region, reaching some 9,200 feet, and is in close proximity to Caesarea Philippi.
- E. There is some question as to the time of day in which this event occurred, night or day?
 1. If it were Mt. Hermon, the ascent would take the greatest part of a day.
 2. Luke records they descended the next day; therefore making it likely that the event occurred in the light of early evening.
- F. Another question of interest: "why did the Lord take the disciples to a mountain in order to be transfigured?"
 1. It seems that Lord wanted a remote place for this event to occur.
 2. After the event, He will tell the three to keep the vision to themselves until after His resurrection. (Matt. 17:9)

II. THE EVENT.

- A. Matthew and Mark mention that, as implied, when they reached the desired location, Jesus was transfigured. (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2)
- B. Only Luke notes additional specifics.
 1. Luke 9:28 states He took the three to a 'high mountain' to pray.

2. Then, while the Lord was praying, the metamorphosis occurred.
 3. It was also Luke that records that while the Lord prayed, the three disciples 'were heavy with sleep.' (Luke 9:32)
 - a. It seems evident that the brightness of the light awakened the sleepy disciples.
 - b. Likewise, the conversation of the Lord with Moses and Elijah may have contributed to their arousal.
 4. Luke will be the only one to note the content of the Lord's conversation.
 - a. They specifically spoke of the Lord's death, which would obviously precede His return to the Father.
 - 1) The term 'deceased' (KJV), is from the Greek term *exodus*, meaning 'exit,' or 'departure.'
 - 2) The Lord would be accomplishing more than merely dying; there would be a resurrection and ascension.
 - b. Hence, the content of the conversation primarily centered upon what would be accomplished by virtue of the impending death and resurrection; there would be the establishment of the kingdom and the procuring of means for the redemption of man's sin.
- C. Note the particulars of the transfiguration.
1. Since He changed in form, it seems it must have been into some semblance of His heavenly glory. ('His Glory' Luke 9:32)
 2. He must have maintained His features, for the three did not fail to recognize Him.
 3. The description provided is:
 - a. 'His face did shine as the sun (Matt. 17:2); and 'His countenance was altered.' (Luke 9:29)
 - b. His garments were described as:
 - 1) 'White as the light.' (Matt. 17)
 - 2) 'Glistening, exceeding white so as no fuller on earth could whiten them.' (Mark 9)
 - 3) 'White and glistening.' (Luke 9)
- D. The glorious nature of this event is heightened by the appearance of Moses and Elijah.
1. The appearance of these great men is equally as interesting, (if not more so), than the manner in which they departed this earth.
 - a. Moses was told to go to Nebo to see the promised land and then die. God would Himself bury Moses. (Deut. 32,34)
 - b. Elijah was taken into heaven by a whirlwind. (2 Kings 2:11)

- c. Moses had been dead more than 1,500 years. Elijah had been dead about 850 years.
2. Even the casual student wonders how the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah.
 - a. The answer is likely as a result of hearing the conversation; but the Lord could have simply identified them.
 - b. This aspect of the event lends credence to the view that there will be recognition of the saints in the spirit realm.
 - c. The recognition of Elijah is particularly important at this point, considering the question the Lord asked the disciples in Caesarea Philippi. (Matt. 16:13-14)
- E. Peter's proclamation will also play a pivotal role in the course of the event.
 1. Peter was obviously enthralled by the scene, and awed by the fact that he is getting to witness this event – "It is good for us to be here."
 2. As Moses and Elijah are departing, the impetuous disciple deemed it necessary to propose that they (the three), should build tabernacles (*skene*, temporary habitats) for the Lord, Moses and Elijah.
 3. Both Mark and Luke record that Peter did not realize what he was saying; i.e. he did not realize the absurdity of his proposal.
 4. The proposal was absurd from at least two vantages:
 - a. What would be the logic for providing habitat for those from the Hadean realm? Temporary or not, they would have to return.
 - b. Secondly, and most disturbing, is the proposal places Moses and Elijah on equal par with Christ.
 5. Note the Father's answer to the proposal and the particulars.
 - a. The writers reveal that there was a 'bright cloud,' which 'overshadowed' them. (*episkisazo*, to envelope in a haze of brilliancy)
 - b. This scene is rather reminiscent of the 'cloud,' which led Israel through the wilderness.
 - c. The text states while the disciples were enveloped in the 'cloud,' the Father spoke from Heaven, answering Peter's proposal and putting it in proper perspective. (Luke 9:35; Matt. 17:5)
 - d. At this point the disciples became fearful and put their faces to the ground.
 - e. After which, Jesus returns to His earthly form, reaches out to touch the disciples, telling them not to be afraid.

- f. As they look up, only Jesus remains.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENT.

- A. The significance of the Lord being transfigured before these three disciples was to make clear:
 1. His eternal nature. (John 1:1-3; John 8:56-58)
 2. His purpose for coming to earth to be sacrificed.
 - a. This had been the subject of His conversation with Moses and Elijah.
 - b. The Lord had been explaining to His disciples that He must die and then be raised. (Matt. 16:21)
 - c. This event was particularly needed for Peter's sake, because he had audaciously rebuked the Lord for suggesting such a prospect. (Matt. 16:22-23)
 3. His superiority and authority over Moses and Elijah.
 - a. Moses was considered one of, if not the greatest leader of the Jews.
 - 1) He was God's appointed one to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage.
 - 2) He was the one unto whom God gave the Law.
 - 3) Thereby, His presence represents the Law; which was commonly known as the Law of Moses.
 - b. Elijah was considered one of the greatest of the prophets.
 - 1) It was Elijah who had so proficiently denounced and destroyed the prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 18)
 - 2) It was Elijah who continually urged Israel to return to the keeping of the Law.
 - 3) Thereby, as a prophet, his presence represented the sum of the prophets.
- B. God's proclamation concerning Christ provides heavenly testimony of Christ's authority and deity.
- C. Moses had, centuries before, prophesied of the authority of the very one unto whom he spoke at the scene on Mt. Hermon. (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22-23)
- D. Peter will later recall the event as testimony to ensure his readers of the truth concerning the Lord's deity. (2 Peter 1:16-18)
- E. While it is the case that the Law and the Prophets played significant roles in God's scheme of things, their role was completed upon the death of Christ. (Col. 2:14)
- F. It is now by Christ, and Christ alone, that man has any hope of being redeemed. (John 8:24; John 14:6; Heb. 9:11-15)
- G. The Father's admonition concerning Christ was "Hear ye him."

1. This statement forever verifies Moses' prophetic admonition to the Jews. (Deut. 18:15)
2. If we must 'hear' Christ, and we do; then the Father's testimony at the transfiguration adds credence to Jesus' claim that His words would be the criteria for the judgment. (John 12:48)

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the word 'transfiguration'?
 2. Who also appeared with the Lord as witnessed by the three disciples?
 3. What was the content of the conversation the Lord had with the other two visitors?
 4. What was the significance of the appearance of the other two visitors?
 5. What was the significance of the Father's reply to Peter?
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SHAVE AND A HAIRCUT

Ezekiel 5

Tom Snyder

1. One of the most difficult tasks of any preacher, past or present, is to get people to see themselves as God sees them.
2. If someone had a gaping, bloody wound, they would seek help immediately. Ailments not readily seen and felt are sometimes deadly because they are neglected.
3. How often does man do this as it pertains to his sins? We cannot see the heinousness of sin, so it is allowed to continue until it destroys us.
4. God sent prophets to the people that they might see their lives of sin as He sees them and turn to the Great Physician.
5. Jeremiah dealt with such an attitude on the home front in Jerusalem, and Ezekiel dealt with it in captives from Israel by the river Chebar (Ezek. 1:1).
6. Ezekiel chapter 5 is just one out of many lessons presented by God through His prophet to try to get them to see their condition: Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations (Ezek. 16:2).
7. In this chapter we see:
 - a. 1-4 – The image of the shave and haircut
 - b. 5-11 – The indictment against Israel

c. 12-17 – The three-fold destruction

DISCUSSION:**I. SHAVE AND A HAIRCUT. vs.1-4**

- A. The book of Ezekiel contains many figures, parables, and dramas.
- B. He has been called the “Audio-visual Aids Prophet” because of these many symbols.
- C. In verses 1-4, Ezekiel was to:
 1. Take a sharp sword and use it to cut his beard and hair;
 2. Carefully divide the hair into 3 equal parts.
 3. One part was to be burned; another was to be struck with a sword; the last part was to be scattered to the wind.
 4. Ezekiel was to “act out” the first third (the burning of the hair) of this parable at the time of the siege of Jerusalem; the second third (striking with a sword) was to be round about the city of Jerusalem.
 5. One of the fascinating and perplexing issues with the book of Ezekiel is its parables.
 - a. Some of them were to be acted out in front of the people;
 - b. Some of them took place “in the spirit”;
 - c. Some of them were spoken or written as literal, but there is no evidence they actually took place;
 - d. Case in point: Ezekiel was by the river Chebar and it is not reasonable, nor necessary for the purpose of the parable, for Ezekiel to travel back to Jerusalem to accomplish these things.
 6. In the process of telling this symbol, he is also shown the meaning of it: destruction, complete destruction.
 7. A small amount of hairs were hidden away (which we will deal with shortly), but even among these, some were destroyed.
 8. Why this parable?

II. BECAUSE OF THEIR PLACE BEFORE GOD. vs.5-11

- A. The people to whom Ezekiel speaks are in captivity.
 1. The question on their lips (or should be) is, why are we here?
 2. It is not because of mere social/political reasons.
- B. Why were they in captivity on the river Chebar? Why was their beloved Jerusalem going to suffer a worse fate? What were the reasons?
- C. Consider the placements, some by God, some by themselves.
 1. v.5, The physical placing of Jerusalem. God placed them in the midst of the nations:

- a. This was not as a temptation, but so Israel could be a light and a blessing.
- b. They were meant to be unique, but they became like those about them and even worse.
2. v.6, The moral placing of Jerusalem. They placed themselves in wickedness:
 - a. This was by perversion of truth, and, refusing God's way.
3. v.7, The Law misplacement, they misplaced it:
 - a. God had given them the Law which, had they kept it, would have made them unique;
 - b. Rejecting God's statutes and judgments made them like the nations round about, lawless.
4. v.8, The judgment placement God placed them:
 - a. God said He was against them;
 - b. He would execute judgments; and—
 - c. It would be in the sight of these nations they wanted to be like.
5. vs.9-10, The suffering placement, they caused it:
 - a. It would be most terrible;
 - b. While they caused it by their abominations, it is God's judgment;
 - c. They are scattered because of their sins.
6. v.11, The idol placement, which they placed:
 - a. Such was a defilement;
 - b. Such were considered detestable things and abominations;
 - c. For this reason they would suffer and God would not have pity;
 - d. The time of compassion had passed, 2 Chron. 36:15-17.

III. GOD'S THREE-FOLD DESTRUCTION.

- A. They were to know of God's complete and diverse destruction, v.12:
 1. Step by step, destruction would come;
 2. But by this came God's grace, allowing them to see and turn from their wicked ways.
- B. They were to understand God's justice would be satisfied, v.13.
 1. Notice the words "anger" and "fury";
 2. These are not simply emotions, but the omni-justice of God;
 3. This justice was to be satisfied, cf. Rom. 6:23.
- C. They were to understand that they were to be God's object lesson to the nations, vs.14-15.

1. They were to be a waste, a reproach, a taunt, an instruction, and an astonishment;
 2. This object lesson should have served also as a warning to the Jews of Jesus' time, as well as beyond.
- D. They were to understand that it is God sending these woes upon Israel, vs.16-17.
1. Notice the famine which would destroy; the evil beast; pestilence; blood and sword;
 2. These are of God.

IV. LESSONS FOR THE CAPTIVES BY THE RIVER CHEBAR.

- A. The wages of sin is death.
1. God is not mocked; the sowing they did demands a reaping, Deut 31:1ff.
 2. Man may forget his God, but God does not forget man.
- B. Those removed from Jerusalem are still subject to God's judgment.
1. Those removed from Jerusalem were not removed from their wicked ways, Ezek. 3:3-7.
 2. Their salvation was not in the land nor the temple, but in the Lord;
 3. Unless they repented, they likewise would perish, Luke 13:3.
- C. True hope is only in God.
1. They were to realize their hopelessness in the flesh and turn to God;
 2. They must realize they were there for the duration.

V. THE FEW PIECES OF HAIR.

- A. The purpose of this parable is to show their hopeless state because of sin.
- B. $1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3$ equals a whole – the whole of Israel would be lost.
- C. Yet, there is a flicker of hope:
1. They are few, very few, in number, v.3;
 2. While protected, the number is yet diminished, v.4.
- D. What is left is a remnant.
1. This is a nation worthy of destruction, yet God preserves it;
 2. When Israel truly sees their hopelessness which will come with the destruction of the temple, Ezekiel will change his message to one of hope;
 3. This hope is not in the seed, this God destroyed, Matt. 3:9-10;
 4. This hope is not in the nations, these God destroys, chs.25-32;

5. This hope will only be in God, Matt. 7:13-15;
6. The true remnant is the church of Christ, Acts 3:13-26.

CONCLUSION:

1. Through a shave and a haircut, God spoke great and terrible things to them.
2. We learn as well from this:
 - a. The faithfulness of God;
 - b. Where true hope is.
3. While we are removed by time, place, race and covenant, their lessons become our lessons, Rom. 2:1-11.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some other ways and words that describe the heinousness of sin?
 2. Is hopelessness always a bad thing? Name good that comes from hopelessness.
 3. God placed Jerusalem in the midst of the nations. Where has God placed spiritual Jerusalem today and for what purpose?
 4. Do we face the same dilemma of Jerusalem being in the midst of the nations? What are the choices we face?
 5. What are things modern man places his hope in, and how do they contrast with the true hope from the Lord?
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"HANDWRITING ON THE WALL"

Daniel 5

Barry Gilreath, III

1. When one sees the proverbial handwriting on the wall, he or she is faced with an inevitable and imminent doom.
2. This ominous phrase originates from a monumental event in human history [i.e. the fall of Babylon] and is recorded in the pages of God's Word for our learning (cf. Rom. 15:4) .
3. The outright vividness of the Biblical record of Babylon's fall enables the student of the Word of God to learn many valuable lessons.
4. Before those lessons may be harvested, one must first have a proper understanding of the context and text of the passage in consideration.

DISCUSSION:**I. LET US CONSIDER THE CONTEXT.**

- A. It is crucial for one to have an understanding concerning the captors and the captives.
1. The divided kingdoms of Israel each were to be sent into captivity due to their wickedness (cf. Amos 3:11-15 [Israel]; Jer. 6 [Judah]).
 - a. Assyria captured the northern kingdom, Israel, in 722 B.C.
 - b. Babylon led Judah, the southern kingdom, into captivity in 606 B.C.
 2. The beginning of the fifth chapter of Daniel finds Babylon at the brink of being overtaken by the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C.
- B. One must also have a proper foundation of knowledge pertaining to certain kings of Babylon.
1. Nebuchadnezzar served as king at the height of the Babylonian empire.
 - a. For 43 years (605-562 BC), Nebuchadnezzar reigned as king of Babylon at the apex of its prominence and pride.
 - b. It was at this height that God brought humility to the heart of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Dan. 4).
 2. Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, is another interesting monarch.
 - a. The depiction of Belshazzar from the book of Daniel presents to the reader “a bold offender, intemperate, blasphemous, and as having a shameless sense of lewdness” (Lockyer 68).
 - b. Outside of the Biblical record, not much is known concerning Belshazzar in the chronicles of human history.
 - 1) In fact, skeptics had long criticized the Biblical account of Daniel, pointing to the fact that Nabonidus was the king of Babylon at the time of its downfall.
 - 2) Archaeologists have since discovered that Belshazzar was the son of the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus. Furthermore, they have discovered that Belshazzar served alongside his father at the time of the fall of Babylon (Free and Vos 201).

II. LET US CONSIDER THE TEXT.

- A. Belshazzar held a great feast in a banquet hall (Dan. 5:1-4).
1. This feast was a feast of extravagancy (v.1).
 2. This feast was a feast of blasphemy (vs.2-3).

3. This feast was a feast of idolatry (v.4).
- B. The Babylonian king was confronted and confounded by the writing on the wall (Dan. 5:5-9).
 1. An unexplainable image of a hand of a man appeared writing on a particular wall of the great hall (v.5).
 2. The king, once the image of boldness and personal confidence, was now the personification of anxiety and confusion (v.6)!
 3. His most trusted advisors could not determine the meaning of the writing even though a great reward was offered (vs.7-8), and the scene remained a very sobering scene indeed (v.9).
- C. Belshazzar decreed a royal call to the prophet of God (Dan. 5:10-29).
 1. Daniel, the prophet of God, was the king's only hope in giving a proper interpretation of the mysterious message (vs.10-17).
 - a. The queen reminded Belshazzar of Daniel, the very one who once interpreted dreams for King Nebuchadnezzar (v.10-12).
 - b. Daniel was brought before the king. Belshazzar lifted up Daniel and promised to reward him if he would interpret the meaning of the message (vs.13-16).
 - c. Daniel dismissed the reception of gifts; nevertheless, he agreed to interpret the mysterious writing (v.17).
 2. Daniel spoke the meaning of the vision (vs.18-29).
 - a. Daniel spoke of the past (vs.18-21).
 - b. Daniel addressed the present (vs.22-23).
 - c. Daniel prophesied of the future (vs.24-28).
 - d. Belshazzar suffered, that very evening, a tragic fall (Dan. 5:29-31).

III. LET US CONSIDER THE MODERN APPLICATION.

- A. We must not dismiss the threat of impending judgment.
 1. Perhaps, to Belshazzar, the great empire that his forefathers had created would stand the test of time, and as he rested upon the laurels of the past, his future became very bleak.
 2. As judgment nears, many will claim "peace and safety" before sudden destruction will fall upon them (cf. 1 Thess. 5:3).
- B. National sin brings forth national judgment (Hailey 107).
 1. This served true for Israel, Judah, Assyria, and even Babylon.
 2. The leaders of today's nations would do well to remember this and take the proverb of Solomon to heart: "It is an

- abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness” (Prov. 16:12).
3. We must not desecrate the use of sacred things (Thomas 172-173)!
 - a. Belshazzar called for the sanctified [set apart] items of the temple (cf. Exodus 29:43; Lev. 8:10), and used them for wicked purposes.
 - b. A Christian is sanctified [set apart] (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). Diligence must be given so that one does not desecrate the sacredness of the blood-washed soul (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18).
 4. We must not uplift ourselves in defiance and opposition to God.
 - a. Physically speaking, Belshazzar had every reason in the world to be confident. At that point in human history, the majesty of the Babylonian empire was unmatched by any previous world empire.
 - b. He would have done well to remember these wise words of Solomon: “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).
 5. How tragic it is when history repeats itself!
 - a. Belshazzar refused to heed the warnings of the relatively recent past, and he was met with quite an unfortunate end.
 - b. Anyone living today is truly blessed to have the examples of others found within the Biblical record, whether good or bad, for we must learn from the past (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

CONCLUSION:

1. This divine “object lesson” and the summation of the events surrounding the fifth chapter of Daniel serve as a treasure trove of personal application for the child of God.
2. May we all take these pertinent matters to heart, and may we come to exhibit a proper understanding and godly fear when it comes to the judgment of our own souls.

QUESTIONS

1. Like Belshazzar, what happens when we fail to learn from the past?
2. What are some observations that could be made in reference to the pride and fall of Belshazzar (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12; Prov. 16:18)?
3. What are some things we learn from the handwriting of God (cf. Deut. 9:10; John 8:6-10; Rev. 20:12-15)?
4. Is “the writing on the wall” present for the wicked today (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12)?

5. Understanding the inevitability of being "weighed in the balances" of God, will you, dear reader, stand before God in judgment and be found "in wanting" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10)?

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HAMAN'S GALLOWS

Esther 6

Barry Odell

1. In this writer's view, the key passage to understanding the book of our study is Esther 6:13. "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him."
 - a. What would cause pagan "wise men" to say such a thing to Haman?
 - b. This passage is reminiscent of Joshua 2:8-13 in which we read of Rahab's statement to the two spies.
 - c. However, before we get too far ahead of ourselves, we must understand the setting and characters of the book.
2. The book of Esther records events that transpired during the reign of the Medo-Persian Empire.
 - a. This political power dominated the world from 539-331 BC.
 - b. We are told by Isaiah and Jeremiah that a man by the name of Cyrus would be the means by which God would deliver His people from their captivity (Isa. 44:28-45:1).
 - c. The Lord had a plan for the descendants of Abraham to bless all nations of the earth through the Christ (Gen. 12:1-3).

- d. However, because of her sin, Israel was to be punished (Isa. 1:5-9).
 - e. The punishment was carried out first by the nation of Assyria in 722BC and then again later by the Babylonians in 606BC.
 - f. God, in His justice, had forewarned His people of the consequences of departing from His law (Deut. 28:49-51).
 - g. Later, God, in His mercy, promised His people deliverance from their captors (Jer. 29:10,14).
3. In order, the main characters of the book of Esther are:
- a. King Ahasuerus (1:1).
 - 1) The Bible reveals for us that this is a very powerful and wealthy king of the Empire of the Medes and Persians (1:1-8).
 - 2) Daniel 9:1 reveals that Ahasuerus was the father of Darius who reigned over this Empire during Daniel's lifetime.
 - 3) Historically, we know that this king reigned from approximately 485-465 BC.
 - b. Queen Vashti (very little of her is known outside of Scripture; 1:9-22).
 - c. Mordecai (2:5-7).
 - 1) The text reveals he was a man concerned about his family (2:7).
 - 2) Mordecai is also presented as an upright man who, even under the reign of a foreign king, did that which was right (2:21-23).
 - d. Esther (2:8-9).
 - 1) As one reads the book which bears her name, it becomes clear she is a godly and courageous woman.
 - 2) She was advanced to a position that became extremely important to the accomplishment of God's scheme of redemption (4:12-14).
 - 3) Even though the name of God is never mentioned in this book, it is evident that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men" (Daniel 4:17, 25).
 - e. Haman (3:1-2).
 - 1) It quickly becomes very clear that Haman is a vain man (3:1-6).
 - 2) Haman reminds all Bible students of this truth, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Prov. 29:2).
 - 3) It is this man and his actions upon which we will build the remainder of this lesson.

DISCUSSION:**I. HAMAN'S CHARACTER.**

- A. We are not introduced to this man until Esther 3.
 - 1. The text reveals that Haman was, "above all the princes that were with him" (3:1).
 - 2. We are also told that all of the king's servants would bow down and reverence Haman, "for the king had so commanded concerning him" (3:2).
- B. A trait revealed about Haman was his quick temper (3:5).
 - 1. Mordecai would not give the reverence to Haman which he thought he deserved and so he became angry.
 - 2. One of the great lessons learned in Esther is concerning the sinfulness of a quick temper.
 - 3. James wrote, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20).
 - 4. Solomon wrote, "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated" (Prov. 14:17).
 - 5. Anger, by itself, is not sinful (Eph. 4:26). However, the word used in Esther 3:5 translated as "wrath" literally means, "heat, rage, or indignation."
 - 6. Haman lost his temper when he did not get something he thought he deserved and was so angry that he was willing to commit murder!
- C. Haman's character is further revealed as he comes up with a plot to punish Mordecai and the Jewish people (Esther 3-5).
 - 1. By this time, Esther has discovered the plan of Haman to destroy the Jews, been convinced by Mordecai to speak to Ahasuerus, and now plans a banquet at which time she will act on the Jews behalf (Esther 4).
 - 2. Haman is honored to be invited to a feast, but notice the reaction when he runs into Mordecai (Esther 5:9-13).
 - 3. As a result of his whining, his wife and all his friends recommend that Haman build a 75 foot high gallows on which to hang Mordecai (Esther 5:14).
 - 4. Haman's childishness is revealed after Mordecai is honored by the king (Esther 6:4-14).
 - 5. The lesson learned from this particular passage is that God's people and purpose will prosper (Esther 6:13b).
 - 6. In the New Testament, this fact is reconfirmed. Acts 5:38-40; Rom. 8:37-39

II. HAMAN'S GALLOWS.

- A. Chapter 7. Esther's feast for the king and Haman is under way.

1. The gallows have been prepared for Mordecai. Haman's plan is in the works and things seem to be going well for him.
2. However, it is at this time that Esther makes her brave stand for the people of God (Esther 7:4-6).
3. The lesson learned in this chapter is recorded frequently in the pages of the Bible as the law of sowing and reaping.
 - a. Moses taught this lesson to Israel (Num. 32:20-23).
 - b. Hosea preached this message to the people of his day (Hosea 8:5-8).
 - c. The apostle Paul told the churches of Galatia, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

III. THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE PRESERVED.

- A. Esther 8-10 records the promotion of Mordecai (8:2) and the king's decree that the Jews could defend themselves against Haman's wicked plot (8:3-6).
 1. Notice the great results of Esther's willingness to approach the king as recorded in chapter 8:15-17.
- B. Instead of the Jewish people being destroyed, this book reveals that 75,800 of their enemies were destroyed in two days (9:1-16)!
- C. At this point in time a feast is established known as Purim (9:25-28).

CONCLUSION:

1. It is this writer's opinion that the greatest lesson learned in the book of Esther is the reality of the providence of God.
2. Although the name of God does not appear in the text, the hand of God is seen throughout the book.
3. The Lord made a promise to His friend, Abraham, many years before these events that through his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed.
4. God was involved in the events of human history to preserve the Jewish people for the purpose of bringing the Christ into the world in the "fullness of the time" (Gal. 4:4).

QUESTIONS

1. Esther 1 discusses the drinking of wine and its results (1:7-12). Biblically, the term wine is generic and is always to be defined by the context in which it is found. Discuss the negative impact that "wine" (alcoholic beverages) has had on the world.
2. Including the events involving Vashti, what is the Bible's teaching in regard to modest apparel?

3. Considering the role of men like Mordecai (Esther 2:21-23) and Daniel, what is the Bible's teaching in regard to political involvement for the child of God?
 4. Discuss the Biblical teaching of sowing and reaping.
 5. Though the phrase "the providence of God" is never found in the Bible, how is the principle displayed throughout Biblical history?
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SIMON AND JESUS' CROSS

Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23

John Carlisto

1. The Master has given instruction, that every man should "take up His cross and follow me (Jesus)."
 - a. We each have a cross to bear, which we can and must bear.
 - b. Only the Son of Man, though, could bear the cross of Calvary.
 - c. However, in the midst of the Savior's execution procession, a Cyrenian is compelled to carry the very instrument of the Lord's death.
 - d. What lessons may we learn?
2. Very little is known about this Cyrenian.
 - a. We know that he was called Simon.
 - b. This indicates he was one of the many Jews who lived in Cyrene, a city in Pentapolis of Libya (North Africa).
 - c. Many Cyrenians are mentioned in the New Testament as followers of Christ (Acts 11:20; 13:1).
 - d. He had two sons, Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21).
 - 1) The mentioning of his sons is clearly given to clarify the specific Simon under consideration.
 - 2) It has been presumed that Simon's sons are the Christians mentioned in Acts 19:33 and Romans 16:13.
3. We will perhaps never know for sure the impact that carrying the cross had on Simon or what the influence he had on his children and others.
 - a. Was he a disciple of Christ or just a passerby?
 - b. Either way, the Spirit's record of the event shows it to be a part of God's eternal plan.
 - c. There are a few things that are clear upon which we will spend our time in this sermon.

DISCUSSION:**I. OUR SAVIOR WAS SUBJECTED TO HUMAN FRAILTY.****A. HIS HUMANITY.**

1. Empathy is one of the most comforting aspects of the Gospel. (Heb. 4:15,16)
2. Jesus knew suffering in a way that few have experienced. Being omnipotent God, Jesus knew nothing of weakness.
 - a. Why would he become guest to a weak and vulnerable tabernacle?
 - b. It was so He could face death for all men.

B. HIS SCOURGING .

1. The 2nd member of the godhead truly emptied himself and became fragile flesh. (Matt. 27:26-31)
2. The need for Simon's help reminds us of the cruel and savage beating of our Lord.
 - a. To display his humanity, a beaten and weakened Jesus is shown struggling under the burden of His own cross.
 - b. We may reasonably infer that this is the reason Simon is compelled to bear the cross to Golgotha.
 - c. Simon's bearing the cross is a beautiful metaphor of the disciples of Jesus being His "feet," and carrying "Jesus Christ and him crucified" out to a lost world.

C. HIS DEATH.

1. How often were criminals so badly beaten that they could not bear their cross?
2. Yet, in the case of Jesus, though so savagely beaten and crucified, Jesus died on His own terms (Matt. 27:50; John 19:30; cf. John 10:15,17,18; Isa. 52:13,14).
3. Jesus certainly was not going to release His spirit until all was finished.

II. OUR SAVIOR PASSED THE TORCH OF BURDEN-BEARING.**A. IN HIS STEAD.**

1. Paul said that with regard to himself there were lacking "of the afflictions of Christ". (Col. 1:23-24, ASV; cf. 1 Cor. 16:27)
2. The afflictions of Christ are lacking in our lives today, in the sense that we can never suffer enough for Jesus.
3. While this is true, our lives can be lived as though they have been offered completely to God.

4. AS HIS SERVANTS.

- a. We cannot serve Jesus as though he had needs (cf. Acts 17:25, ASV).
- b. We serve Him by serving others. (Matt. 25:31ff)

- c. Simon had the rare opportunity to serve the greatest among men. (Gal. 6:2,10; 1 Peter 4:10)

III. OUR SAVIOR PASSED THE TORCH OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

- A. We, like Simon, though not desiring to suffer, are compelled to do so as disciples of Christ. (cf. 2 Sam. 24:22-24)
1. It is overwhelming to consider what the cross cost Jesus. (1 Cor. 15:25-28)
 2. Even years after His ascension, Christ still refers to Himself with earthly roots. (Acts 22:8)
 3. Simon's act was wonderful and honorable, but like our sufferings, not worthy to be compared to the price that Christ paid.
 4. Similarly, we can attempt to join Christ in his sufferings, but should never think that we have done something worthy of praise.
- B. Romans 12:1
1. Some have attempted to take this "reasonable service" or "act of worship" and teach that everything that we do in life is worship.
 2. While that certainly is not true, our lives can be lived as though they have been offered completely to God. It is our duty to suffer when necessary for our Savior.

IV. OUR SAVIOR PASSED THE TORCH OF SERENITY.

- A. INTO THE FATHER'S HANDS.
1. Jesus came to serve (John 13:14); but also taught us by allowing others to serve Him. (Luke 7:44)
 2. Simon is a special example of one's serving Jesus. He bore the cross of Jesus, thus showing that we also must quietly bear our crosses of service and sacrifice.
 3. Jesus took upon himself the "form of a servant" (Phil. 2:6-8); and, thus did He serenely "taste death."
- B. THE LORD PREPARES TO EXPIRE.
1. We, too, must surrender to our Lord. (Mark 15:37)
 2. Eventually we all have to let go of our spirit and pass on a heritage of cross-bearing to the next generation.
 3. How do we do that? The scene of a man, perhaps even initially reluctant, carrying the cross of our Lord, teaches us how it is done.

CONCLUSION:

1. The account of Simon of Cyrene is slight, yet full of lessons which we cannot ignore.
2. What a service he rendered, to teach us about the service we must render.

3. Through providence, God chose one man to bear for His son the heavy blood-stained cross that would shortly thereafter take the life of the life-giver.
4. Can we doubt that when Simon finally handed that cross over to the guards there was a lasting impression?
5. We too must take up a cross; though let us never forget that the blood, sweat, and tears that afforded us this privilege were not ours.
6. What a privilege it is for us to bear our own cross, a much lesser cross.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think that the Spirit chose this account to be part of Scripture?
 2. How would you have felt being asked to carry the cross of this man, who had claimed to be, the king of the Jews?
 3. Following Jesus with the cross, what do you think Simon observed of Jesus?
 4. How do we through preaching and supporting preaching bear the cross of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2)?
 5. With the cross symbolizing suffering service, what should we be willing to endure in aid of our Lord's will?
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CAUGHT UP INTO THE THIRD HEAVEN

2 Corinthians 12

Ben F. Vick, Jr.

1. "Virtual reality" (n) is defined as "a hypothetical three-dimensional visual world created by a computer; user wears special goggles and fiber optic gloves etc., and can enter and move about in this world and interact with objects as if inside." (American Heritage Dictionary.)
2. I recall a computer game we used to have by which one could take simulated flights in different airplanes. One could choose the plane, the airports and the weather conditions. After I had played the game a few times, I began to dream about flying solo to various cities. The flights seemed so real, but neither the simulated flights nor my dreams were reality.
3. However, Paul relates having been caught up into the third heaven. The trip was reality.

4. Some questions which may come to one's mind as he reads of this amazing journey are:
 - a. What is the context in which this journey is related?
 - b. How does the allusion to this journey relate to Paul's defense?
 - c. Was Paul patting himself on the back for his accomplishments?
 - d. Why mention this journey?

DISCUSSION:

- I. **"IT IS NOT EXPEDIENT FOR ME DOUBTLESS TO GLORY."**
 - A. "Glory" is translated in other places as to boast, to vaunt (in a good or bad sense). (See Strong's dictionary.)
 - B. It was a distasteful thing for the apostle Paul to boast or brag. It was just not his nature, but due to the circumstances, he was forced to do so.
 1. Judaizing teachers had boasted of their credentials and had attempted to plant the seeds of distrust into the minds of the Corinthians concerning Paul's credentials.
 2. The apostle Paul's authority/apostleship was being questioned by these false teachers in order to:
 - a. Cast doubt in the minds of the Corinthians.
 - b. To instill or infuse their error (i.e., the binding of the law of Moses) into the minds of the Gentiles.
 3. So Paul, as unpleasant as it was to his nature, he had to stoop to their level in order to answer them. Paul would not have boasted of himself except for the defense of the truth—his apostleship. Keep in mind, it had been fourteen years since his having been caught up into the third heaven; yet, he had said nothing about it until now.
 4. In 2 Corinthians 10-12, Paul defends his apostleship. He said, "I speak as a fool."
 - a. Sometimes one must answer a fool according to his folly (Prov. 26:5). Since Paul was writing by inspiration, we know it is not wrong to defend one's self when truth is at stake.
 - b. However, we do need wisdom to know when it is time to keep silence, and when it is a time to speak (Eccl. 3:7).
 - c. Secondary lesson: If Paul found it difficult to boast even about his sufferings and sacrifices as an apostle, why is it that some seem to find it so easy to boast about themselves when truth is not at stake? (See: Prov. 11:2; 16:18; 29:23).
 - d. The false teachers who had accused Paul of not being an apostle, forced him to vindicate his apostleship. Keep in mind that he was being directed by the Holy

Spirit to write. He called upon the Corinthian saints to bear with him in his folly as he boasted of or gloried in:

- 1) His authority (2 Cor. 10:8).
- 2) Not having worked in other men's labors nor another's line of things (2 Cor. 10:13-16).
- 3) His having refused support from the church at Corinth while he labored with them, though at that time he received support from others (2 Cor. 11:7-10).
- 4) His sufferings more than others (2 Cor. 11:23-28; 12:9-10).
- 5) The one caught up into the 3rd heaven/paradise (2 Cor. 12:1-6).

II. KNEW A MAN CAUGHT UP INTO THE THIRD HEAVEN (2 Cor. 12:1-6).

- A. Paul said: "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord."
1. *Visions* — the Greek word is defined as "a sight, a vision, an appearance presented to one whether asleep or awake, Acts 26:19" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database.) Others received visions: Zacharias Luke 1:11; Mary Luke 1:26; Cornelius Acts 10:3; Peter Acts 10:9-19.
 2. *Revelations* — translated from a word which means properly, a laying bare, making naked (1 Sam 20:30), and "tropically, in N.T. and ecclesiastical language a disclosure of truth, instruction, concerning divine things before unknown 1 Cor 2:10." (Ibid.)
 3. *Caught up* — the words mean the man was by divine power transferred marvelously and swiftly into the third heaven (Ibid.) Ezekiel, by the hand of the Lord, was lifted up between heaven and earth and brought to Jerusalem (Ezek. 8).
 4. *Third heaven* — is described as paradise (2 Cor. 12:4).
 - a. First heaven is where the birds fly (Gen. 1:20; Luke 9:58).
 - b. Second heaven is where the sun, moon and stars are found (Gen 1:14-19; Psa. 19:1-6).
 - c. Third heaven is where God's throne or dwelling place is located (Deut 4:39; Matt. 5:16, 45; Acts 7:56).
 5. *Paradise* — Thayer's definitions:
 - a. Among the Persians, a grand enclosure or preserve, hunting ground, park, shady and well watered, in which wild animals were kept for the hunt; it was enclosed by walls and furnished with towers for the hunters.

- b. A garden, pleasure ground, 2a) grove, park.
 - c. The part of Hades which was thought by the later Jews to be the abode of the souls of the pious until the resurrection: but some understand this to be a heavenly paradise.
 - d. The upper regions of the heavens. According to the early church Fathers, the paradise in which our first parents dwelt before the fall still exists, neither on the earth or in the heavens, but above and beyond the world.
 - e. Heaven.
- B. "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth" (12:2-4.)
1. Perhaps you have heard of experiences of those who claimed they had died. They claimed their spirits hovered over their bodies as doctors and nurses tried to revive them. However, if they actually had died, it would have been a miracle when brought back to life. Miracles have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10).
 2. However, in Paul's case, he did not know whether he was in his body or out of it. He did not know, but God did.
 3. This shows that the inner man, or soul of man, lives whether in the physical body or out of the physical body (2 Cor. 5:1-10; Eccl. 12:7; James 2:26; Rev. 6:9-10)
 4. Some teach the idea that when one dies that his soul "sleeps" until the resurrection. Sleep in reference to death, according to my study, is a reference to the body, not the soul.
 - a. If one is asleep, how could he hear or see? Paul heard words which he could not utter.
 - b. Other passages for consideration are Daniel 12:2, Acts 2:25-26, Matt 27:52.
 - c. What about Ecclesiastes 9:5 which says "the dead know not any thing"? However, see the qualifying statement in the context: "under the sun."

III. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF ALLUDING TO THIS HEAVENLY TRIP?

- A. Ezekiel revealed his journey to Jerusalem and the message given to him (Ezek. 8), but Paul's man caught into the third heaven was not allowed to tell what he had heard (2 Cor. 12:2-4).
- B. When seven thunders uttered their voices, John was about to write, but a heavenly voice told him to seal up the things uttered and write not (Rev. 10:4). Likewise, Paul was not to express what he had heard. Why? Deut. 29:29.

- C. Fourteen years before the writing of this epistle would take one back to the time frame of Paul's first missionary journey. He had some difficulty with the Jews on this journey. At Lystra he was stoned and drawn out of the city, having been supposed dead. Some have suggested that this was the time he was caught up into the third heaven. I do not know.
- D. Since it was unlawful for Paul to tell what had he had heard, then the content of what was said must have been for Paul alone. But how encouraging it must have been to him!

IV. SOME LESSONS GLEANED:

- A. The humility of Paul stands out foremost in this passage. He was silent about this journey to the third heaven for fourteen years and then, only revealed it because he was directed by the Holy Spirit to do so. And notice how he did it: "I knew a man." He did not say: I was caught up into the third heaven (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3).
- B. Though Paul had been silent about the trip until this epistle, he still did not reveal what was said. It was unlawful for him to do so. Yet some things we can appreciate more, if we remain quiet about them (Matt. 6:1-4).
- C. What a comforting thought to be in the presence of God. Perhaps Paul was able to endure so much because he knew what joy would be his; that is, to be with God forever. Though we will not make the kind of journey that Paul made, if we remain faithful, we can know that same comfort when this life is over and eternity begins for us. (Rev. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:1-9).

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Paul find it necessary to boast? Is all boasting sin? (Psa. 52: 1; Prov.25:14; Jer. 9:23; Rom. 1:30; James 3:5)
 2. In the context of 2 Corinthians 10-12, what specifically were the things that Paul boasted?
 3. Who was the man caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2)? Can you name any other religions which claim that one of their leaders was caught up to heaven?
 4. Can you name the three heavens mentioned in the Bible? Please cite verses.
 5. Why did Paul mention the man's having been caught up into the third heaven? Is the third heaven the same as paradise?
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ELISHA, THE SHE-BEARS AND THE HOOLIGANS

2 Kings 2

Ronnie Whitemore

Aim: To capture the setting and context of the events recorded in 2 Kings 2:23-24 and explain the meaning and significance of all terms, events and characters involved and make application for today.

1. Today, God has chosen to speak to man by His Son and through His inspired Word (Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
2. However, in Patriarchal and Mosaic times, God used prophets as His spokesmen.
 - a. Jesus chose the apostles (John 1:42-43). God chose the prophets (Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:13-17; John 1:15).
 - b. The prophets served God faithfully.
 - c. They spoke in God's name or by His authority (Exodus 7:1).
3. The Bible records many spectacular events involving His prophets.
 - a. The prophets foretold of wonderful and fearful judgments (Amos 1:2).
 - b. They faced citizens and kings (Amos 7:9-11).
 - c. Their words often fell upon deaf ears (Acts 7:51).
 - d. As a result, the prophets faced the wrath of rebellious and wicked men (Matt. 5:12).
4. The study for this hour centers upon an incident in the service of the prophet Elisha.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE MAN OF GOD — ELISHA.

- A. Elisha was the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah; his name meant "God his salvation."
- B. Elisha was the disciple of Elijah and his successor (1 Kings 19:16-19).
 1. Elijah approved his successor by throwing his rough mantle over Elisha's shoulders (1 Kings 19:19).
 2. Elisha accepted the call and served as Elijah's attendant for 7-8 years until Elijah was translated to heaven (1 Kings 19:20).
 3. Elisha possessed a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9).
 4. Elisha served as "prophet of Israel" for 60 years (2 Kings 5:8).

- C. Elisha performed many great works as God's prophet.
1. He healed the spring of water (2 Kings 2:21).
 2. He cursed the rebellious youths (2 Kings 2:23).
 3. He predicted the fall of rain (2 Kings 3:9-20).
 4. He multiplied the poor widow's cruse of oil (2 Kings 4:1-7).
 5. He restored life to the widow's son (2 Kings 4:18-37).
 6. He multiplied 20 loaves of bread to feed 100 soldiers (2 Kings 4:42-44).
 7. He commanded Naaman to dip 7 times in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:1-27).
 8. He punished Gehazi for covetousness and disobedience.
 9. He recovered the axe in the Jordan River (2 Kings 6:1-7).
 10. He predicted the siege of Samaria by Syria, the suffering of the people and the ultimate relief (2 Kings 6:24-7:2).
 11. He carried out the command to anoint Hazael king of Syria (2 Kings 8:7-15).
 12. He directed one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu, king of Israel, not Ahab (2 Kings 9:1-10).
 13. He lay on his death bed (2 Kings 13:14-19).
 14. A dead man's body put in the grave with the remains of Elisha and when he touched the remains, the man's spirit was revived (2 Kings 13:21).
- D. Elisha deserved great respect and honor for his work's sake.

II. THE MOCKERS — HOOLIGANS.

- A. The KJV reads, "there came forth little children out of the city..." (2 Kings 2:23).
1. Some commentators accept the translation "little children" from the Hebrew words *qatan naar*.
 2. Other commentators translate these Hebrew words to mean "young lads" or "teenage boys."
 3. Our lesson title uses the term "hooligans" which includes the idea of disrespect or rebellious.
- B. The KJV reads, they "mocked him..."
1. Hebrew word *qalas* (*kaw-las'*) which means to "disparage, ridicule, mock, scoff or scorn" (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance).
 2. It is not their age, but their conduct that condemns them.
- C. The specific words of their ridicule were: "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head."
1. It is a cruel and hateful heart that ridicules another person because of physical appearance.
 - a. It is speculated that Elisha was advanced in years at this time (baldness).

- b. He had no control over this aspect of his personal appearance (Matt. 6:27).
 - c. Gray hair or baldness was a tribute to the age and experience of God's servant.
2. Some explanations for the phrase "Go up" include a reference to Elijah's being taken up into heaven.
- a. Therefore, the term "Go up" may have challenged Elisha to follow the path of his righteous predecessor.
 - b. There is no reason to suspect that the citizens who despised Elijah for his work's sake would also despise Elisha.

III. THEIR IMPERTINENCE.

- A. Though the hooligans were guilty of mocking the prophet of God, their words were symptoms of deeper sins.
 - 1. They held contempt for the man from God.
 - 2. They possessed disrespect for God.
- B. Their willingness to mock God's servant insinuates influence from others.
 - 1. Perhaps peers or other youths influenced them.
 - 2. Perhaps their own parents influenced their conduct.
- C. It is a disrespectful heart that leads one to scoff a dedicated man of God.
 - 1. Earlier, we cited the many wonderful works of Elisha.
 - 2. This faithful prophet devoted his life to serving the Lord.
 - 3. He earned the respect of the citizens, not their ridicule.
- D. It is an ungrateful heart that leads one to ignore the continued work of this prophet.
 - 1. Elisha went to Bethel to bless the sons of prophets in their school.
 - 2. Teenage boys should have been eager to listen to the counsel of this devoted prophet.
- E. It is the responsibility of parents to chasten their children under such circumstances (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4).
 - 1. Yet, these "hooligans" held contempt and disrespect for a chosen prophet of God.
 - 2. How could their public reproach go unpunished?

IV. THE MIRACLE.

- A. Elisha cursed the youths for their bold sin.
 - 1. The Hebrew word translated "cursed" is *qalal* (*kaw-lal'*).
 - 2. The primitive root means "to make light" or literally "swift, small, sharp," etc.
 - 3. The figurative used means "to bring into contempt, curse, despise."

- B. Elisha, therefore, did not pronounce a curse, per se, upon the youths; he countered swiftly with his own words of contempt for their actions.
 - 1. What if he uttered the word “hooligans?”
 - 2. What if he blamed their upbringing in an unrecorded statement as Jesus stated, “Wisdom is justified of her children?”
 - 3. Whatever Elisha’s words, he plainly indicted his disgust with their mocking.
- C. The miracle came in the form of a judgment issued by God.
 - 1. Jehovah directed the emergence of the she-bears as judgment upon the cursed children.
 - a. The she-bears were not specially “created” for this occasion, but these creatures were used by God to accomplish His will (re: Jonah and whale).
 - b. She-bears, if protecting their young, can be vicious animals.
 - c. There is a bit of irony that God uses aggressive animals that normally protect their own young to punish 42 youngsters.
 - 2. Some judgments are swift and final.
 - a. This punishment ended the time of repentance for these young critics.
 - b. There would be no more opportunities to repent and do right.
 - 3. Some judgments send a message to others.
 - a. The pain and suffering of their parents had to be intense in the death of their children and especially in the horribleness of their death.
 - b. The parents were cut to the heart on this occasion as God was cut to the heart by their contempt for His prophet.

V. THE MESSAGE (APPLICATIONS).

A. Man of God.

- 1. Preachers, elders and other leaders are God’s tools for good today.
 - a. They have great works to accomplish.
 - b. They deserve our help, our respect and our prayers.
- 2. The heathen will always rage against workers of righteousness (Psalm 2:1).
 - a. Jesus warned His disciples about persecution (Matt. 5:10-12).
 - b. “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).
- 3. Preachers have an obligation to rebuke the rebellious and reject heretics (2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 3:10).

B. Mockers and their Impertinence.

1. These young people possessed evil hearts for a reason.
 - a. They were influenced by the older generation (Luke 7:35).
 - b. They were taught and made "two-fold more the child of hell" as their parents (Matt. 23:15).
 - c. Many times 'problem children' are the result of 'problem parents.' (Did Jacob's sons learn the art of deception from their father?)
2. Younger generations may be ungrateful of the sacrifices and work of the older generation.
 - a. Young preachers may be unappreciative of the fires built by the older preachers.
 - b. Young leaders may be disrespectful of the battles fought and commandments enforced by elders of the church.
3. These acts of rebellion, though directed at others, really are acts of defiance against God and His Word.
 - a. Israel's desire to have a king was a rejection of God (I Sam. 8:7).
 - b. Jesus told Saul of Tarsus that He considered his attacks against the church as persecution against Him (Acts 9:4).

C. Miracle with the She-bears.

1. God is God and not man (Hosea 11:9).
 - a. Critics do not understand the ways of God (Isa. 55:8-9).
 - b. But, God knows the hearts of men and the extent of the rebellion of a nation (cf. Acts 1:24).
 - c. In the Old Testament, He often destroyed entire nations, including children, because of the depth of sin (re: Amalekites).
2. Whether Elisha pronounced the punishment or whether God initiated the punishment, it had divine approval.
3. Parents can teach and train their children in righteousness or watch them be destroyed by the world.

CONCLUSION:

1. Elisha was a faithful and courageous prophet of God.
 - a. He discharged his duties faithfully.
 - b. He deserved the respect of his countrymen.
 - c. Unfortunately, he was met with scoff and ridicule from the youngest of his generation.
2. God dealt with the sin of that generation.
 - a. His punishment was a message to all citizens of the possible swiftness and severity of His wrath.
 - b. His punishment is a message to our generation as well.

3. May faithful men and women like Elisha prosper; may the enemies of God suffer defeat.
4. We would do well to learn the lessons of this story and make proper application to our lives.

QUESTIONS

1. Who called out the she bears? Elisha, or God?
 2. Is it true that God was more stern with people under the Old Testament than the New?
 3. What is an “imprecation?” Are there any New Testament examples of such?
 4. Is there good reason to think that the “children” in this case were not simply little ones making fun of a bald man?
 5. What are some practical lessons to be drawn from this account?
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JONAH: THE FISH AND THE GOURD

Book of Jonah

Guyton Montgomery

1. Preachers have been using the visual to emphasize lessons throughout the years.
 - a. In older times, presenters used sheet sermons, flannel charts, different objects and overhead projectors.
 - b. In more recent times, computer projection has become extremely popular and widely used.
2. The importance of using the visual or objects has been used to increase the retention of the material being presented.
 - a. Everyone does not learn the same.
 - 1) There are *auditory* learners that learn most efficiently through just listening to a sermon, lecture, tape, etc.
 - 2) There are *visual* learners that learn most efficiently through seeing a picture, example, outline, etc.
 - 3) There are *tactile* learners that learn most efficiently through touching, or a “hands-on” approach.
 - b. Learning efficiency is increased when the teacher uses a combination of the learning techniques (auditory, visual, & tactile).
 - c. When only verbal instruction is used, there is only ten percent retention.
 - d. When only visual instruction is used, there is only twenty percent retention.

- e. When verbal and visual instructions are combined, there is thirty percent retention.
 - f. When verbal, visual, and tactile instructions are combined there is a dramatic increase of retention up to seventy percent.
 - g. Further yet, for ninety percent retention an instructor should combine verbal, visual, and tactile in a realistic setting.
3. Using the visual is not a new concept, but instead what God has always used to help his people learn and convey a message (Eccl. 1:9).
 4. The book of Jonah contains two excellent visual and object lessons that were not only important for Jonah, but for all who have ever read the inspired words in this great book.

DISCUSSION:

I. AS WITH ANY STUDY, ONE SHOULD CAREFULLY CONSIDER ALL BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO GAIN A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE LESSONS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

- A. There is one specific person and two groups of people to be considered in the book of Jonah.
 1. Jonah, the son of Amittai, is the prophet after whom the book is named having been born in Gath-hepher in the tribe of Zebulun and living during or before the reign of Jereoboam II, 830 B.C. (2 Kings 14:25)
 2. The ship's crew were men that strove to do that which was right.
 3. The Ninevites were Assyrians who were prosperous people that were cruel and arrogant conquerors, despised by anyone that was not an Assyrian.
- B. The places under consideration are of great interest.
 1. Nineveh, named after the goddess of Ishtar, was the capital city of ancient Assyria and the ruins are in modern day Iraq.
 2. Tarshish was a city of the western Mediterranean near Spain that was well known for its trade in minerals.
 3. Joppa, where Jonah caught the ship, was the port of Jerusalem since the days of Solomon and was a town on the south-west coast of Palestine.
 4. Gath-hepher, where Jonah was born, was a town of the tribe of Zebulun, on the border of Zebulun and Naphtali.
- C. The objects God used had a great impact upon Jonah.
 1. The great fish is perhaps the most recognized object and is what makes Jonah such a popular Minor Prophet. (1:17-2:10)
 - a. While many refer to "Jonah and the Whale," there is no indication that this great fish was a whale.

- b. This was a great fish that God had prepared for this purpose, and some believe he had prepared it from the time of creation (Jonah 1:17).
2. The gourd, while not as well-known as the great fish, still contains a great lesson (Jonah 4:5-11).
 - a. Many believe this to be the “palm-christ” (palma-christi). It grows from eight to ten feet high. Only one leaf grows on a branch, but that leaf being often more than a foot large, the collective leaves give good shelter from the heat. It grows rapidly, and fades as suddenly when injured.” (JFB)
 - b. While is not certain what kind of plant this was, it is certain that it was able to provide shade.
3. The worm, also prepared by God, smote the gourd. (Jonah 4:6)

II. THERE ARE MANY LESSONS FOR ONE TO LEARN FROM THE BOOK OF JONAH THAT ARE STILL IMPORTANT TODAY.

- A. God’s love is extended to all mankind (Jonah 4:2, 11).
 1. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35; 1 Peter 1:17).
 2. He loves mankind, as a father loves his children (Psa. 103:13; 1 John 3:1)
 3. God is love, and sent His son to save us because of His love (1 John 4:8-10; 3:16).
 - a. If we want to be like Christ and be godly, we must also love all mankind (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31).
- B. The Gospel is to be preached to all mankind (Jonah 1:2).
 1. This is the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16).
 2. The Gospel must be preached to all mankind, for it is the power of salvation and God desires all to be saved (Rom. 1:16; 2 Peter 3:9).
- C. Man cannot hide from God, for He is the creator and ruler over all of His creation.
 1. Even great men of faith had to be reminded of this fact.
 - a. Abraham was told this concerning the birth of Isaac (Gen. 17:1; 18:14).
 - b. Job had to be reminded of this fact, despite his great faithfulness (Job 42:2; 28:4-38).
 2. God’s strength is everlasting (Isa. 26:4).
 3. All things are possible with God (Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37).

CONCLUSION:

1. Each one should be careful to not think that he wouldn’t be like Jonah (1 Cor. 10:12).

- a. Impulsively, one would deny wanting anyone to perish.
 - b. However, what about the terrorist (world trade center pilots, Osama-bin-laden, or the one that killed one's son or daughter in Iraq or Afghanistan), a mass murderer, a pedophile, etc.
2. Each Christian should allow the love of God to permeate his very being, and love all mankind, not because of their deeds, but because they are God's creation.

QUESTIONS:

1. What impact does the visual have in learning, and how should it be used in the church?
 2. How can one have love and share that love for those that are given over to vile and horrible acts?
 3. Can you think of some occasions when men (even Christians) want to "hide" from God? How should one respond to such occasions?
 4. Do the sort of feelings of nationalistic exclusivism manifested by Jonah ever manifest themselves in the church?
 5. Does the church today still view God as being in control of the world today?
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THE WRESTLING MATCH AT PENIEL —PREVAILING IN DEFEAT—

Genesis 32

Alan Adams

1. "Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt. ²Jehovah hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. ³In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he had power with God: ⁴yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Beth-el, and there he spake with us, ⁵even Jehovah, the God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial name. ⁶Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God continually." (Hosea 12:1-6, ASV)¹

2. Centuries after the life and death of Jacob, God used Jacob's life as an overlay, and spoke of both the punishment and promise that awaited His people.
3. He mentions three signal events in the life of Jacob.
4. He was one of a set of twins, but emerged from the womb with his hand on his elder brother's heel; "so his name was called Jacob" (Gen. 25:26, NKJ), which derives from the idea of one who takes by the heel, or one who supplants.
5. There was the time when Jacob "in his manhood...had power with God: yea,...and power over the angel, and prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).
6. This refers to that event when Jacob "wrestled a man" (Gen. 32:24), "the angel" (Hos. 12:4), who explained that Jacob had indeed "striven with God and with men, and [had] prevailed" (Gen. 32:28); which is why Jacob named the "place Peniel [saying,] I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved" (v.30).
7. The clause, "he wept and made supplication to him" (Hos. 12:4), may be reasonably viewed as attached to this event.
8. This would fit beautifully with the idea of Jacob as a type of Jesus (cf. Heb. 5:7).
9. In fact, it is in this sense, rather than superior wrestling skills, that Jacob "had power over the angel, and prevailed."
10. There was the time when he [Jehovah] found him [Jacob] at Beth-el, and there he [Jehovah] spake with us [Israel collectively in the person of Jacob].
11. This lecture is concerned with signal event number two: When Jacob had power with God.
12. From the womb to the grave (Gen. 25, 50), Jacob's life covered 147 years (cf. 47:9, 28).
13. He was born to Isaac and Rebekah in Canaan.
14. One of a set of twins, he started his life with his hand on the heel of his firstborn brother, Esau; thus, he was named Jacob meaning he who takes by the heel, or supplants.
15. His life ended 147 years later in the land of Egypt, and with Pharaoh's permission, his remains were transported back to the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 50:13), where he was buried.
16. He had fathered twelve sons, and later in connection with the divine Promise, included the sons of Joseph as his own.
17. One of the great chapters of the Book of Genesis is chapter 49, which contains his prophecies regarding his sons and their descendants, who would come to the nation of Israel.
18. Jacob's divine wrestling opponent spoke of Jacob's having "striven with God and with men."
19. Struggle and striving indeed characterized Jacob's long life.
20. Still in the womb with his twin, Esau, the "children struggled within" (Gen. 25:22).

21. Jehovah was with him in this "struggle," and proclaimed before their birth that the "elder shall serve the younger" (v.23). The prophecy was about "two nations," which would come from their respective descendants.
22. Some of his struggle came as his faith in God and His promises were tested by people and events.
23. Some of his struggle, though, was caused by instances of his own dishonesty and deceit; such as, he and his mother conniving to deceive Isaac into passing the "blessing" to Jacob, rather than Esau the firstborn (Gen. 27).
24. This led to Jacob's leaving home at the age of 77 and traveling back to stay with his uncle Laban in Haran.
"Jacob left home at the age of 77 (This is figured from the following info: Jacob was 130 when he first stood before Pharaoh (Gen. 47:9), at which time Joseph was 39; thus, Jacob was about 91 when Jacob was born; since Joseph was born about the end of Jacob's first 14 years with Laban, then Jacob was about 77 when he left home and went to stay with Uncle Laban.)"²
25. At the hands of his deceitful uncle, Laban, Jacob had to take some of his own medicine.
26. Twenty years, two wives, eleven children, and much livestock later, at the age of 97, he headed back to Canaan.
27. Laban, thinking himself despoiled by Jacob, pursued, but God protected Jacob in this strife (cf. Gen. 31).
28. Coming south down the east side of the Jordan, Jacob's faith in divine protection was emboldened when "the angels of God met him" (Gen. 32:1). So inspired was he, that he exclaimed, "This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim" (2).
29. His next trial, or struggle, came with the news that his brother Esau was on his way accompanied by 400 men (v.6). Remembering his own deceitful actions, and the anger of his brother those 20 years ago, Jacob was "greatly afraid and was distressed" (v.7).
30. Having made arrangements to protect loved ones from perceived pending danger, Jacob "was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."
31. This lecture deals with this wrestling match and lessons to be learned.
32. Thus did the prophet Hosea say, "in his manhood he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed" (Hos. 12)
33. Thus did Jacob name the wrestling venue, "Peniel," saying, "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:30).
34. A staid and sedentary life is not a life lived with God. It is not the life of one who proclaims, "When Christ who is our life..." (Col. 3:4)

DISCUSSION:

1. The Text (Gen. 32:24-32).
2. Jacob wrestled and grappled with a man through the night until daybreak.
3. The other wrestler could not overpower Jacob.
4. He used extraordinary means to cause the “socket of Jacob’s hip [to be] out of joint as He wrestled with him” (NKJ).
5. The tenacious Jacob kept wrestling despite the pain.
6. The other wrestler called for Jacob to “let me go.” Jacob, realizing that he was wrestling with no man, said, no “except thou bless me.”
7. The other wrestler, revealing His identify, blesses Jacob saying, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou has striven with God and men and hast prevailed.”
8. Supplicating Jacob asks, “Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.”
9. It was more a rhetorical question.
10. Thus this divine wrestler said, “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.”
11. This sacred site of struggle was named then by the prophet Jacob, “Peniel (aka Penuel), for said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”
12. The sun rose, Jacob limped on his thigh. The event made such an indelible mark in Hebrew history that centuries later, Moses said, “Therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew of the hip.”
13. The Exposition
14. The identity of the other wrestler.
15. He is said to be “a man.” Hosea referred to Him as “the angel.”
16. Jacob said he had seen “God face to face.” Hosea said Jacob had “had power with God,” and that he had “had wept and had made supplication unto him.”
17. This mysterious One could assume human form, by touch disjoint a man’s hip, could be supplicated, and could bless.
18. This is a description of deity, God.
19. This is but one of many ancient corporeal manifestations of the One who said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).
20. “If God walk in the garden with Adam, expostulate with Cain, give a specification of the ark to Noah, partake of the hospitality of Abraham, take Lot by the hand to deliver him from Sodom, we cannot affirm that he may not, for a worthy end, enter into a bodily conflict with Jacob. These various manifestations of God to man differ only in degree. If we admit anyone, we are bound by parity of reason to accept all the others.”³
21. What a virtual sermon indeed. Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed.

22. Jehovah changed Jacob's name from Jacob, which means heel-grabber, to Israel, which means God strives and prevails.
23. This virtual sermon showed that Jacob's prevailing with God, in reality, came through his submission to God.
24. Jacob's life was/is a testimony to this great truth.
25. The Application
26. To follow Hosea's commentary, we learn about "manhood."
27. "In his manhood he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him."
28. He was a type of the greater "manhood" of Jesus (cf. Heb. 5:7-9)
29. In our trek to the "better, that is the heavenly country" (11:16; cf. 12:22), each of us must have his own Peniel, the place where we come to grips with God.
30. A disjointed hip, a "thorn in the flesh," are sometimes necessary to show us that His grace is sufficient.
31. It is a fact that in being followers of the Lord, there will be those times when it "need be that we be put to grief in manifold trials" (1 Peter 1:6).
32. In such cases, we struggle with God and will prevail, if we, like Jacob, are tenacious, and refuse to cry, Uncle. We must fight on, and like Jacob ask for the blessing, which comes by winning through submitting.
33. If we walk with the Lord; we will, as it were, struggle with the Lord. It is inevitable.
34. We must remember, though, that we win in such struggles, because they flow from submission from God's will. Peter said, "If need be" (ibid.)

CONCLUSION:

1. Of the various and sundry ways by which God has revealed Himself to us, surely none is any more amazing than the wrestling match at Peniel.
2. Striving against God is a no-win proposition.
3. Striving with God, as all who obey Him must, is the means by which we prevail both with man and with God.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is Hosea's application of the event at Peniel?
 2. Discuss the distinction between striving *with* God, and striving *against* God.
 3. Cite some instances of Jacob's striving with men, which were of his own making. How does this relate to Peter's words, "if need be" (1 Peter 1:6)?
 4. How did Jacob prevail with God?
 5. With whom did Jacob wrestle at Peniel?
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JEREMIAH BUYS QUESTIONABLE REAL ESTATE

Jeremiah 32

Harold Bigham

1. Will Rogers is quoted as saying, “Don’t wait to buy land, they aren’t making any more of it.”
2. Our lesson involves the buying of questionable real estate, not because of any deceptive land deals or charades, but because of the time element and circumstances involving the purchase.
3. God commanded Jeremiah to buy land in Anathoth from Hanameel, Jeremiah’s cousin.
 - a. Hanameel comes to Jeremiah to ask him to buy his field in Anathoth.
 - b. Anathoth, a town just three miles northeast of Jerusalem and of the tribe of Benjamin, was Jeremiah’s home (Jer. 1:1).
4. Would this land purchase be a wise investment?
5. This virtual lesson provides great object lessons for God’s people concerning the power of Jehovah and His concern for His people.

DISCUSSION:

1. **JEREMIAH PURCHASES QUESTIONABLE REAL ESTATE (Jer. 32:1-15).**
 - A. The time and circumstances of the purchase are revealed (Jer. 32:1-5).
 1. Jerusalem is under siege and Jeremiah is in prison.
 - a. Jeremiah had told King Zedekiah of the impending invasion and ultimate destruction by the Chaldeans.
 - 1) Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon and his troops would destroy Jerusalem and take God’s people in exile for a period of seventy years.
 - 2) Zedekiah’s eyes will be removed and he would be led to Babylon in chains (Jer.39:7).
 - b. Zedekiah, incensed by the prophecy of Jeremiah unjustly puts him in prison.
 2. Human reasoning would dictate that this would not be a wise time to buy real estate.
 - a. Jeremiah is in prison.
 - b. Jerusalem is under siege by enemy troops (Jer. 32:24-25).
 - c. Family land had already become enemy-occupied territory.

3. Man has always thought God's ways are illogical (Isa. 55:8-9).
 - a. Naaman dipping seven times in the Jordan River would be considered illogical by modern medical standards (2 Kings 5:1-14).
 - b. Marching around the walls of Jericho seven times on the seventh day would be considered illogical by modern military standards (Josh. 6:1-5).
 - c. The preaching of the cross is illogical and foolish to many people (1 Cor. 1:18-28).
 - 1) One church is illogical to the practice of denominationalism (Eph. 4:4; Matt. 16:18).
 - 2) Immersion for the remission of sins is illogical to many who prefer the unscriptural religious practice of sprinkling and pouring (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:38-39).
 - 3) Partaking of the Lord's Supper each Sunday is illogical to many who partake annually or quarterly (Acts 20:7).
- B. God speaks to Jeremiah about the details of the real estate purchase and Hanameel arrives to ask Jeremiah to buy his field (Jer. 32:6-7).
- C. Jeremiah had the right to redeem the property (Jer. 32:7-8).
 1. This is Jeremiah's right by reason of his family relationship (Lev. 25:23-31).
 2. God commanded Jeremiah to buy the real estate.
- D. Jeremiah buys the field (Jer. 32:8-9).
 1. He believed God's promise that "houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (Jer. 32:15).
 2. Jeremiah's purchase showed an investment in hope for God's people.
 3. Jeremiah demonstrated obedient faith.
 - a. Noah obeyed God in building the ark (Gen. 6:14-22).
 - b. God is well pleased when we obey Him (Heb. 11:6).
- E. Jeremiah paid seventeen shekels for the real estate (Jer. 32:9).
 1. Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
 2. We must consider the cost to be a Christian (Luke 14:25-33).
- F. The real estate was purchased in the sight of witnesses and the deed was executed by Baruch (Jer. 32:10-12).
 1. One copy of the deed was sealed.
 - a. God's Word is sealed or settled (Psa. 119:89).
 - b. We must not revise God's Word (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:6).

2. The second copy was made public and available.
- G. The deeds were placed in an earthen vessel for protection (Jer. 32:13-14).
 1. Christians as earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7) are to teach the Gospel to others (Matt. 28:18-20).
 2. Christians are to guard and protect the Gospel (Jude 3).
- H. The real estate purchase illustrated God's love (Jer. 32:13-15).
 1. It provided hope for them to return after the seventy years of Babylonian captivity.
 2. Christians have the promise of an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:1-7).

II. JEREMIAH GIVES ADORATION TO GOD (Jer. 32:16-25).

- A. Jeremiah prays and lists God's omni-attributes (Jer. 32:16-19).
 1. God as Creator is all-supreme (Jer. 32:17; John 1:3; Psa. 115:15).
 2. God is all-powerful (Jer. 32:17,27; Luke 1:37).
 3. God is all-merciful (Jer. 32:18; Psa. 103:8-14; Micah 7:18; Eph. 2:4).
 4. God is all-righteous (Jer. 32:18; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Thess. 1:6-9, Rom. 2:5).
 5. God is all-wise (Jer. 32:19; Rom. 11:33).
- B. Jeremiah prays about God's forbearance and God's justice (Jer. 32:20-25).
 1. God delivered them from bondage (Jer. 32:21; Psa. 4:8).
 2. God gave them a land of milk and honey (Jer. 32:22).
 3. God's wrath and justice is revealed toward them (Jer. 32:23-24).
 4. God guided Jeremiah to buy the field for their good (Jer. 32:25).

III. GOD IS IN CONTROL (Jer. 32:26-44).

- A. Nothing is too hard for God (Jer. 32:27; Job 42:2; Matt. 18:27).
- B. God's power is shown (Jer. 32:28-29).
- C. God's justice demanded punishment of them (Jer. 32:30-35; Rom. 3:23).
- D. God's love is promised to them (Jer. 32:36-44).
 1. They would return from Babylonian captivity (Jer. 32:36-37).
 2. God will make a new everlasting covenant (Jer. 32:38-40; 2 Cor. 6:16).
 - a. The New Testament is the everlasting covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 3:20-21).

- b. This prophecy is fulfilled in Christ and His church (Heb. 8:7-13; 9:15; 10:16-17).
- 3. The extent of God's love and justice is revealed (Jer. 32:41-42).
 - 1) They would enjoy a renewed hope and a new life.
 - 2) In Christ, we can have renewed hope and a new life (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- 4. The purchase of real estate indicates blessings from God after returning (Jer. 32:43-44).
 - a. The prodigal son was blessed after returning home (Luke 15:11-24).
 - b. Gal. 1:4, Rom. 3:23; 6:23, Eph. 1:3.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jeremiah's real estate purchase gives us many valuable object lessons.
2. God's everlasting covenant (the New Testament) offers eternal salvation from the bondage of sin to those who obey Him and become His chosen people.

QUESTIONS

1. What made this real estate purchase questionable?
 2. What right did Jeremiah have to purchase Hanamel's land?
 3. What attributes of Jehovah are exclaimed in Jeremiah's prayer?
 4. Why were the copies of the deed placed in an earthen vessel?
 5. What is the everlasting covenant?
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ANGELS ON A LADDER

Genesis 28

Jared Knoll

1. We know not what a day may bring forth; nor do we know how "life changing" the decisions (perhaps even mistakes) that we make today may be for the future.
2. Though we may not always receive it, humans thrive on assurances (as a child needing to be assured of the love of a parent and etc.)
3. Our text involves both life-changing effects and assurance: The Virtual Sermon: Angels on a Ladder.
4. Our approach will be: An overview of critical history, an analysis of the significance, and a response to the sermon.

DISCUSSION:**I. AN OVERVIEW OF HISTORY TO SET THE CONTEXT.**

- A. God called Abraham, through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). God would give him:
 - 1. A great progeny through whom this blessing would come.
 - 2. A land in which this progeny would dwell.
 - 3. Fellowship through faith.
- B. The promise was extended through Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah.
 - 1. Remember also, however, that Abraham had tried to “get ahead of God” (Gen.16).
 - 2. God assured Abraham that the covenant would be established through Isaac and his seed after him (Gen. 17:19).
 - 3. Isaac married Rebekah and she bore two sons, Jacob and Esau (Gen. 24; 25:21-26).
- C. Of the two sons of Isaac, it would be Jacob through whom the promise would be perpetuated (Gen. 25:23; Rom. 9:10-13).
 - 1. Like his grandfather before him, there was the attempt to “get ahead of God.”
 - 2. Jacob craftily used Esau’s fleshly appetite to secure the birthright (Gen. 25:27-34).
 - 3. Jacob also cunningly secured the blessing of His father with the help of his mother (Gen. 27).
- D. Esau had expressed desire to slay Jacob (Gen. 27:41).
 - 1. He had come to despise his birthright (Gen. 25:34).
 - 2. He had grieved his parents in selecting Judith, the daughter of a Hittite, to wife (Gen. 26:34,35).
 - 3. The final straw was this second supplanting (Gen. 27:36).
- E. As we enter on our text, Jacob is fleeing for his life. He is a fugitive on the run.
 - 1. His mother having been told of Esau’s intentions sends him to Laban until Esau’s fury shall be turned away (Gen. 27:42-45).
 - 2. His father sends him with a charge as well (Gen. 28:1-5).
 - 3. His brother wants him dead. He must leave his parents behind. He must leave his “homeland.” What shall become of the birthright and blessing?

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VIRTUAL SERMON: “ANGEL’S ON THE LADDER.”

- A. The Summation of what was seen as it applies to Jacob’s situation regards three particular features.
 - 1. The ladder signifies an open and uninterrupted pathway to heaven from earth. He might be removed from his

- parents and homeland but not from God nor His blessing and promise.
2. The angles signify the providential care of God (Heb. 1:14). The continuous ascending and descending present to Jacob God's abiding presence, providence and protection.
 3. God being at the top signifies the source of blessings. He is overseeing. He is in control.
- B. Consider the Consummation (completion/perfection) of what was seen by Jacob. Jacob was a type.
1. Jesus made use of the illustration when speaking to Nathanael (John 1:51).
 2. Like Jacob, Jesus had no pillow (Matt. 8:20).
 3. Like Jacob, Jesus was heir of the covenant, actually the seed of promise (Gal. 3:16).
 4. Like Jacob, the head of the family. Jacob, the physical, but Jesus the spiritual (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22,23).
- C. Consider the application of the virtual sermon as seen by Jacob and consummated in Christ.
1. We are not alone, as Jacob was not (Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20; Acts 7:55, 56).
 - a. We can apply this to the need for salvation.
 - b. We can apply this to the need for fellowship, especially in times of despair, trials, sickness, temptation and such.
 - c. We can apply this to the need for God's providence, otherwise wherein is the power of prayer (James 5:16).
 2. It assures of reconciliation (Heb. 2:17; Dan. 9:24). There is not an "impassable gulf" between God and man while on the earth if we will seek reconciliation.
 3. As seen at the top of the ladder, God is the author of salvation (Heb. 5:8,9). His way is the only way (Acts 4:12).
 4. The scene also represented revelation.
 - a. We cannot know unless God reveals; and, He has revealed through his Son (Heb. 1:1-3).
 - b. God revealed or assured Jacob of the promises: Progeny, Possession, Protection, and Presence.
 - c. God has likewise revealed promises to us through Jesus, "our ladder" (2 Peter 1:3,4).
 - d. The revelation awakened his mind. "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not." May God's word so strike our minds that God can make His abode with us (John 14:23).

III. THE RESPONSE OF JACOB TO THE VIRTUAL SERMON.

- A. A sermon is prepared and presented with a desired result in mind — We preach to persuade, to exhort, to edify. We preach to convert the lost, to restore the erring and to establish the faithful.
- B. We would be remiss if we were inattentive to the response of Jacob toward the sermon.
 1. Jacob stood in awe, in godly fear and reverence at the presence of God (Gen. 28:17).
 2. Jacob worshiped in response to the sermon (Gen. 28:18).
 3. Jacob renamed the place where the sermon took place (Gen. 28:19).
 4. Jacob vowed to serve God and tithe believing the message of the sermon (Gen 28:20-22, “If” means “since” and in no way expresses doubt or a bartering with God).
- C. What is your response to the preaching of Jesus? The Gospel, which when obeyed will vouchsafe the promises of the life that now is and the life which is to come?

QUESTIONS

1. What is signified by the vision of the angels on the ladder?
 2. Abraham “got ahead” of God. Can we do that today? How?
 3. In light of Jesus’ reference to the “ladder” event in John 1:51, how is Jacob a type of Jesus?
 4. In light of Jesus’ application of the “ladder” event, what assurances does Jacob’s Ladder give us?
 5. What should be our response to such assurances?
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THE UNDONE MAN

Isaiah 6

Garland M. Robinson

1. The beginning verses of Isaiah 6 is a most significant record in revealing the majesty of God.
 - a. v.1, The Lord God of the universe is shown as sitting upon His throne, high and lifted up — a position of power and glory. (cf. Ezek. 43:7a; Jer. 17:12)
 - b. His train filled the temple. His royal robe, as it were, covering the floor round about.

- c. v.2, Above the throne stood *seraphims*.
 vs.3-4, "And one cried unto another, and said, *Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory. 'And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.'*"
- d. No greater scene of *dignity, grandeur, majesty and glory* can be depicted by man.
2. In the midst of such magnificence, Isaiah considers himself:
 v.5, "*Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.'*"
3. Isaiah is so overwhelmed — humbled at the sight of God on His throne.
- a. There's nothing he can say. Nothing he can do to compare with the Lord of glory.
- b. His lips are so unclean. His neighbors are no better!
- c. He is so inferior and insignificant.
- d. He stands in awe of God. He is so **UNDONE, UNWORTHY!**
- e. He must give reverence and respect to God.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE LORD GOD IS SUPREME, HIGH AND HOLY.

- A. Exodus 3:2, Moses saw the glory and power of God in a burning bush that was not consumed.
- B. God's holiness, His majesty, His righteousness is expressed:
 Exod. 15:11, "Who [is] like unto thee, O LORD, ...glorious in holiness, fearful [in] praises, doing wonders?"
 Josh. 24:19, "...Joshua said... Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he [is] an holy God; he [is] a jealous God...."
 1 Kings 22:19, "Hear...the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left."
 1 Chron. 16:29, "Give unto the LORD the glory [due] unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."
 Psa. 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork."
 Psa. 68:34, "Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency [is] over Israel, and his strength [is] in the clouds."
 Psa. 89:5, "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints."
 Psa 89:7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all [them that are] about him."
 Psa. 96:6 "Honour and majesty [are] before him: strength and beauty [are] in his sanctuary."
- C. The Lord God truly is high and lifted up.

II. MANY HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED GOD'S HOLINESS.**A. The *seraphims*.**

Isa. 6:3, "...One cried unto another...Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory."

B. *Hannah* prayed fervently.

1 Sam. 2:2,6-7, "[There is] none holy as the LORD: for [there is] none beside thee: neither [is there] any rock like our God. ... ⁶The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. ⁷The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up."

C. Scores have been those who gave praise to God.

Psa. 57:5 "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; [let] thy glory [be] above all the earth." also v.11

Psa. 99:9, "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God [is] holy."

Psa. 103:1, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, [bless] his holy name."

Psa. 111:9, "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend [is] his name."

Psa. 100:4, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, [and] into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, [and] bless his name."

Psa. 108:3-5, "I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. ⁴For thy mercy [is] great above the heavens: and thy truth [reacheth] unto the clouds. ⁵Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;"

Psa. 148:13, "Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory [is] above the earth and heaven."

D. The heavenly scene in the book of Revelation.

Rev. 4:10-11, "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Rev. 5:12-13-14, "...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. ¹³And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, [be] unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Rev. 7:12, "Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, [be] unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

III. IN CONTRAST TO THE MAJESTY OF GOD, WE FIND THE WRETCHEDNESS OF MAN TO BE SO GREAT.

A. Isaiah — Isa. 6:5, "Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Isa. 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

B. Abraham — Gen. 18:27, "...I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which [am but] dust and ashes:"

C. Jacob — Gen. 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant..."

D. Job — Job 9:19-20, "If [I speak] of strength, lo, [he is] strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time [to plead]? ²⁰If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: [if I say], I [am] perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."

Job 38:4,6,16-19,22, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. ... ⁶Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; ... ¹⁶Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? ¹⁷Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? ¹⁸ Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. ¹⁹Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, ... ²²Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail."

Job 40:3, "...Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."

Job 42:3,6, "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. ... ⁶Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." See also Job 15:14.

Job is shown the foolishness of man in chapters 38-41.

- E. Daniel — Dan. 9:16,18,20, “O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people [are become] a reproach to all [that are] about us. ... ¹⁸...behold our desolations...for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. ... ²⁰And whiles I [was] speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD...”
Gabriel came and revealed the prophecy of the 70 weeks.
- F. Peter — Luke 5:8, “...he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”
- G. Paul — Rom. 7:14-25, “...I am carnal, sold under sin... ¹⁵what I hate, that I do. ... ¹⁸I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not. ¹⁹For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ... ²¹...when I would do good, evil is present with me. ... ²⁴O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”
- H. Jesus — Luke 17:10, “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

IV. MAN SHOULD SHUDDER AT THE PROSPECT OF STANDING BEFORE THE MOST HIGH GOD IN JUDGMENT.

- Lev. 11:44, “For I [am] the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I [am] holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”
- Lev. 19:2, “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God [am] holy.”
- Psa. 130:3, “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”
- Matt. 16:27, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”
- 2 Cor. 5:10, “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."

Acts 17:31, "...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 24:25, "...He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Rom. 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

Rom. 14:11-12, "For it is written, [As] I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. ¹²So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

2 Tim. 4:1, "I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom."

V. WE HAVE HOPE IN THE LORD — IN HIS SALVATION.

A. Psa. 8:3-4, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; ⁴What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Psa. 144:3-4, "LORD, what [is] man, that thou takest knowledge of him! [or] the son of man, that thou makest account of him! ⁴Man is like to vanity: his days [are] as a shadow that passeth away."

Psa. 119:81, "My soul fainteth for thy salvation: [but] I hope in thy word."

Rom. 8:13, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

2 Cor. 1:9-10, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: ¹⁰Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us];"

2 Cor. 5:2, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:"

2 Tim. 4:18, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve [me] unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Titus 2:14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Psa. 119:82,133,143,176; 130:1-2
Micah 7:18-19; Rom. 6:3-18

CONCLUSION:

1. What will your sentence be?
2. Obey the Gospel by **Believing** in Christ (John 8:24), **Repenting** of sins (Acts 2:38), **Confessing faith** in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), being **baptized into Him** (Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-18).
3. **Live faithful** (1 Cor. 15:58).
4. We will enjoy the peace and comfort of knowing that even though we can't save ourselves, we are safe in the keeping of the Lord because He can save us.

QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss how men cannot prevail in their lives when they deny the holiness and majesty of Jehovah?
 2. Discuss how God has always required respect and reverence?
 3. Discuss how people must learn from the examples of the Bible. See Rom. 15:4
 4. Discuss that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. See Rom. 3:10,23
 5. Show how men can be saved.
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HOSEA, GOMER AND THE CHILDREN

Hosea 1-3

Joel Wheeler

1. Virtual sermons and object lessons are scattered throughout the scriptures for the purpose of strengthening and helping us avoid falling away.
2. The inspired writers warn us of the dangers of unfaithfulness.
 - a. Rom. 15:4 — sacred history is for our benefit.
 - b. 1 Cor. 10:6 — Israel suffered the consequences of sin and their example will keep us from making the same mistakes.
3. The Old Testament prophets served God's purpose of instructing and warning His people.
 - a. The Minor Prophets are little in words but mighty in meaning.
 - b. The prophets were God's people to a wayward nation.

4. The prophet Hosea was chosen to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness and God's longsuffering through the illustration of a faithful husband and unfaithful wife.
 - a. The object lesson serves as a warning for us to be faithful to God's service.
 - b. The object lesson serves as God's love for Israel and love for His people.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE BACKGROUND OF HOSEA.

- A. The prophet Hosea mainly prophesied to the Northern ten tribes of Israel with other prophecies against Judah.
 1. He was chosen by God to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness and spiritual harlotry by running after idols.
 2. The time was about 746 B.C. in which Israel was serving Baal, the idol god of the Canaanites.
- B. Hosea's name means "salvation" and it echoes through the book. (Hosea 13:4)
 1. Names in Biblical times have specific meanings.
 2. Hosea's message had the power to deliver Israel from their sins.
 - a. Isa. 59:1-2, The sins of Israel were very grievous to God.
 - b. The Northern Kingdom was under the influence of wicked rulers.
- C. Hosea was to take a wife from the "whoredom and children of whoredoms" (Hosea 1:2 KJV).
 1. Whoredom in the Hebrew is *zanah* meaning adultery or figuratively it means idolatry (Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionary).
 2. Hosea marries Gomer who is of an Israelite family that worshipped Baal, the idol of the Canaanites.
- D. Hosea and Gomer have three children.
 1. The first is a male child and God instructs Hosea to name the child "Jezreel" (Hosea 1:4).
 2. The second is a female and God instructs Hosea to name the child "Loruhamah" (Hosea 1:6).
 3. The third is a son and God instructs Hosea to name the child "Loammi" (Hosea 1:9).
- E. Gomer "plays the harlot" in that she runs away.
 1. She is later abandoned by her lovers and sold at the slave market.
 2. Hosea brings her back and builds a fence to keep her at home.
 3. She runs away again and Hosea buys her back for the price of a prostitute.

II. THE MEANING OF HOSEA'S MARRIAGE.

- A. God's relationship with Israel was as husband and wife.
 - 1. "And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali" (Hosea 2:16; cf. 2:2). Ishi — or "My husband."
 - 2. Jer. 3:8, 20 — God threatened to put away Israel because of spiritual adultery.
- B. Jeroboam I offered a place for Israel to serve idols and the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. (1 Kings 12:26-33)
- C. Israel ran after the Canaanite god "Baal."
 - 1. Baal was the god of fertility and Israel believed they prospered by serving the idol (Hosea 2:10-13).
 - 2. God said "No other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3,4).
- D. God would punish Israel for idolatry.
 - 1. Jezreel (Hosea 1:4) — "God will scatter." God avenges the house of Jehu and causes them to cease. Jehu put to death Jezebel for her sins but he continued to worship idols (2 Kings 10:23-31).
 - 2. Lo-ruhama (Hosea 1:6) — "No mercy." God will not have mercy on Israel for spiritual adultery. Israel continues to worship idols until the day they are taken into captivity.
 - 3. Lo-ammi (Hosea 1:9) — "Not my people." Israel will not have God to protect them in the land. They will go into captivity by the hands of the Assyrians.
- E. God gave to Israel her blessings, not Baal.
 - 1. Israel's lovers would forsake her.
 - 2. She desired to return to God.

III. LESSONS FROM HOSEA.

- A. God is a jealous God and nothing is to come before Him.
 - 1. At the giving of the Law of Moses, God told Israel that He would not tolerate idols (Exodus 20:3,4; 34:14).
 - 2. God demands of His people to put Him first (Matt. 6:33; 22:37; 1 John 2:15-17).
- B. God is longsuffering (Hosea 2:2,3,6).
 - 1. God was willing to take Israel back and even put a fence around her to keep her home.
 - 2. God doesn't want anyone to be lost. (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
- C. God is faithful in His love and paid the price to redeem man (Hosea 2:23; 3:5).
 - 1. Hosea is a type of God in that he did nothing to cause his wife to play the harlot. Israel committed spiritual adultery by worshiping Baal.
 - 2. Hosea paid the price to buy his wife back because he loved her.
 - 3. It is man who moves away from God. (Isa. 59:1-2)

4. God provided salvation because of His love and mercy. (Rom. 5:8-9)
- D. Trusting in the wrong source will bring destruction. (Hosea 2:9-10)
 1. Israel trusted in the idols of the Canaanites. The idols could not make them prosper nor could it save them.
 2. God will turn them into a desolate land. (Hosea 2:3)
 3. Trusting in the corrupt leaders of the land caused an entire nation to go into captivity (Prov. 14:34)
 4. Israel was destroyed for a lack of knowledge because they rejected God's warnings. (Hosea 4:6)
 5. All men will reap what they sow. (Hosea 8:7; Gal. 6:7-8)

CONCLUSION:

1. God is the provider of all good things. (James 1:17)
 2. God requires faithfulness and serving Him only.
 3. Salvation is to those who are faithful to God. (Heb. 5:8-9)
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THE LINEN LOINCLOTH

Jeremiah 13

Aaron Bigham

1. According to the Sacred Volume, Revelation and Inspiration have come to us "by divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1, ASV).
 - a. The term "divers" literally means "in many ways" (Strong H232).
 - b. Thus, Divine Revelation has come to man in many ways.
 - 1) One way in particular, is through the means of object lessons.
 - 2) By object lessons, we refer to those times when God instructed prophets to do certain things while utilizing an object.
 - a) This method was chosen because of its unique ability to seize attention.
 - b) The common man could relate to the object and understand the lesson being taught.
2. A classic example of such can be found in the sermon of the linen girdle (Jer. 13:1ff).
 - a. In this account, the Lord ("Jehovah", ASV) instructs Jeremiah to purchase an object, namely a linen girdle (v.1).

- 1) This, in all probability, was part of the priestly garments (cf. Lev 16:4), which would make it especially holy or consecrated.
 - a) The girdle was worn as an undergarment right next to the skin, which is precisely what the Lord instructed Jeremiah to do (v.2).
 - b) Hence, it was a very intimate piece of clothing worn around the waist.
 - 2) The Lord further instructed Jeremiah to travel to Babylon and bury the girdle under a rock in the Euphrates River (vs.3,4).
 - a) After many days had passed, Jeremiah was instructed to retrieve the girdle (v.6).
 - b) Of course, upon retrieval he came to find that the linen girdle had been completely ruined (v.7).
 - In all likelihood, the girdle was not only very, very soiled, but also in an advanced state of decay, since linen is a natural fiber.
 - Although, we do not know the extent of the journey, we do know of a surety that it would take a great deal of time for Jeremiah to walk from Jerusalem to Babylon, (a journey of approximately two hundred fifty miles), and back, twice.
- b. So, what purpose did the object serve in this prophetic message (cf. v.8-11)?
- 1) The linen girdle represented Judah's relationship with God.
 - a) As long as Judah clung to God in humble obedience, He was glorified.
 - b) However, when they defiled themselves in pride (unwilling to repent), they became ruined and unprofitable like the linen girdle under the rock.
 - c) Unfortunately, Judah was too proud to repent, and was therefore cast into darkness (vs.15-27).
 - 2) In an analogous type of way, the Christian life can be delineated as a linen girdle, in that we too have a relationship with God.
 - a) As long as we (that is, Christians) cling to God in humble obedience, He is glorified.
 - b) However, when we taint ourselves in pride (unwilling to repent), we too will become ruined and unprofitable like the linen girdle under the rock.
 - c) Like Judah, if we are too proud to repent, then we will be cast into darkness (cf. Matt. 22:13; 25:30).

DISCUSSION:**I. SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP.**

- A. Like the linen girdle, Christians have a special relationship with the God of Heaven.
1. The term "special" is an adjective, describing our relationship with God.
 2. According to definition, "special" means:
 - a. Distinguished by some unusual quality (being in some way superior).
 - b. Held in particular esteem (a special friend).
 - c. Readily distinguishable from others of the same category.
- B. The linen girdle was worn exclusively by priests (cf. Lev. 16:4).
1. The term "priest" is derived from the Hebrew term *kohen*, meaning "to stand".
 - a. In essence, priests were special, in that they stood before God.
 - b. This meant that priests were the ones who performed sacrificial duties.
 2. Consequently, priests under the Old Testament era had a special relationship with God.
 3. In similar fashion, Christians have a special relationship with God.
 - a. All Christians are priests and special in the eyes of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6).
 - b. As priests, Christians perform sacrificial duties (cf. Rom. 12:1,2).

II. INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP.

- A. Like the linen girdle, Christians have an intimate relationship with the God of Heaven.
1. The term "intimate" is an adjective, describing our relationship with God.
 2. According to definition, "intimate" means:
 - a. Belonging to or characterizing one's deepest nature.
 - b. Marked by very close association, contact or familiarity.
 - c. Marked by a warm friendship developing through long association.
 3. Priests, under the Old Testament era, also had an intimate relationship with God.
 - a. Priests dressed in a particular way to reflect the concept of holiness (cf. Exodus 28:4).
 - b. This was designed to demonstrate that these men were entering the service of God.

- B. In similar fashion, Christians also have an intimate relationship with God.
1. Christians dress in a particular way to reflect the concept of holiness (cf. Gal. 3:26,27; 1 Peter 1:15,16).
 2. This is designed to demonstrate that Christians are entering the service of God (cf. John 4:23,24; Matt. 5:16; Rom. 12:1,2).
 - a. Interestingly, an intimate relationship with God means:
 - 1) Christians are to “walk” with the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:21; Col. 2:6).
 - 2) Christians are to “imitate” the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1).
 - 3) Christians are to be “close” to the Lord (cf. Heb. 10:22).
 - b. This can only come to fruition by having an intimate relationship with the Bible (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16,17).

III. CONDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP.

- A. Like the linen girdle, Christians do have a conditional relationship with the God of Heaven.
1. The term “conditional” is an adjective describing our relationship with God.
 2. According to definition, “conditional” means:
 - a. Subject to, implying, or dependent upon a condition.
 - b. Expressing, containing or implying a supposition.
 - c. True only for certain values of the variables or symbols involved.
- B. Priests, under the Old Testament era, had a conditional relationship with God.
1. Priests had to live in accordance to the law of God (cf. Lev. 11:44).
 2. Unfortunately, some priests failed in this area (cf. 1 Sam. 2:12; Mal. 2:1-3).
 3. In similar fashion, Christians also have a conditional relationship with God.
 - a. Christians are to live in accordance to the law of God (cf. Col. 3:16,17).
 - b. Unfortunately, some Christians fail in this area (cf. 1 John 3:4; Col. 3:5ff).
 - 1) Christians have an obligation to remain faithful (cf. Rom. 2:7; Rev 2:10).
 - 2) Scripture provides several examples of those who did such (cf. Luke 9:62; 2 Tim. 4:8).
 - a) Is your relationship with God:
 - Ruined and unprofitable (like the linen girdle under the rock).

- Special and profitable (like the linen girdle around Jeremiah's waist).
- b) One's relationship with God will determine one's eternal destiny (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

CONCLUSION:

1. Do you have a special and intimate relationship with God?
2. If so, has it been marred by the pollution of sin?

QUESTIONS:

1. Can one today scripturally utilize an "object" in the proclamation of the word of God?
 2. What lessons can be gleaned from the term "go" found in this chapter (specifically, vs.1,4,6)?
 3. What was the overwhelming problem facing the people of God? Is this a problem today?
 4. By way of application, can the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19) mar a Christian's linen girdle?
 5. How exactly did Israel become unprofitable?
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THE ROCK THAT FOLLOWED THEM

1 Corinthians 10

Ed White

1. The letter of First Corinthians was written to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2).
2. In the preceding chapter, chapter 9, Paul had used himself as an example to be watchful and diligent lest he, and they, should fail to be approved by God (9:26-27).
3. In chapter 10, Paul writes concerning Israel's apostasy, and used them in warning the Corinthian Christians, lest they should fall, as did the Jews
4. In encouraging his Corinthian brethren, Paul reminds them of the great and marvelous benefits that were provided them by Christ, the rock, who was with them in the wilderness.
5. The same Christ is the one from whom all spiritual blessings had been poured out on the recipients of this 1 Corinthian letter.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE BACKGROUND.

- A. The Old Testament Scriptures are a part of God's revelation to man.

- B. Paul begins chapter 10 by introducing the Corinthian church to “our fathers” (Jewish Fathers, Israel), whom God blessed, yet who had sinned.
1. The Hebrew writer stated that they sinned and failed to enter the promise land because of unbelief (Heb. 3:17-19).
 2. This should serve to warn the Corinthians lest they fail to enter the eternal rest, reserved for the faithful of God (1 Cor. 12:10; cf. Heb. 4:1-11).
 3. The same should serve as a warning to Christians today (cf. Rom. 15:4).
- C. Paul wrote of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage (1 Cor. 10:1-4).
1. They were “under the cloud, and all passed through the sea” (10:1).
 - a. The cloud indicates the presence of God (Exodus 14:19-20).
 - b. All Israel enjoyed the presence of the Lord as they cross the sea on dry land.
 2. They were all “baptized unto Moses” (cf. Exodus 14:5-30).
 - a. This simply means they were committed to Moses as their leader, in the same manner as Christians are committed to Christ, their leader.
 - b. Just as the Israelites left the bondage of Egypt under the rule of Pharaoh and became followers of Moses, Christians leave the bondage of sin when they are baptized and become followers of Christ (Rom. 6:1-4).
 3. They all ate “the same spiritual meat” (10:3).
 - a. Paul alludes to the manna and quails which were supplied by God in the wilderness.
 - b. They were sustained by God by the manna and quail sent from heaven (Exodus 16:15) and by the guidance given them from God through Moses.
 - c. Thus, the meat is referred to as “spiritual” because it was supernaturally supplied and is contrasted by Jesus with himself as the true bread that came down from heaven (cf. John 6:31-35).
 - d. As the Israelites in the wilderness ate of the manna and were preserved alive, Christians today eat of the true or spiritual bread, Jesus Christ.
 - e. One may ask, “how do we eat of Christ?” The answer, of course, is by making him our Lord by doing his will (cf. John 4:34).
 4. “And did all drink the same spiritual drink” (10:4).
 - a. This refers to the water that was supernaturally supplied by the Lord (cf. Exodus 17:6; Num. 20).

- b. Man must have water, and in a literal sense it was provided for the Jewish people in the wilderness.
 - c. Jesus, in his conversation with a Samaritan woman, compares the life He gives to living water, of which if one drinks, shall have everlasting life (John 4:14).
5. "For they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them" (1 Cor. 10:4).
- a. The waters at Rephidim and Kadesh, which flowed from the rocks, did not of itself supply them; the source of power was Christ.
 - b. The drink was literal water, but was produced by a miracle of the Lord (cf. Exodus 17:6).
 - c. "The rock at Horeb from which the drinking water was drawn was a type of Christ who is the Rock of Ages." (E. M. Zerr).

II. CHRIST THE ROCK (1 Cor. 10:4).

- A. The apostle speaks of Christ being the Rock that followed the Israelites.
- B. This is a picture of Christ in his supernatural power even prior to his coming to this earth in human form.
- C. As a member of the godhead, Christ has been in all the actions of God.
 - 1. Christ was with God in the creation (Gen. 1:1,26; John 1:1-5,14).
 - 2. Peter said the Old Testament prophets spoke as the Spirit of Christ directed (1 Peter 1:10-12).
 - 3. He said that Noah had the Spirit of Christ in him, when he proclaimed the will of God to those of his day (1 Peter 3:18-20).
 - 4. "Paul's point is that Israel, in participating in the things of God, [in their] deliverance from Egypt and the nourishing and care provided them by God, [were] actually accompanied by the Christ and they were sustained by Christ!" (Bill Jackson).
 - 5. Christ provided the Israelites with spiritual bread and drink through Moses' teaching (cf. Deut. 8:3; 18:15).
- D. Christ is often spoken of as a Rock in the Bible.
 - 1. Moses often referred to the Lord as a "rock" (Deut. 32:4,15,18).
 - 2. Isaiah, the Messianic prophet, spoke of the Lord as a "rock" (Isa. 17:10).

III. CHRIST, THE ROCK, FOLLOWED THEM (1 Cor.10:4).

- A. It was not the literal rock from which water flowed, but it was Christ who followed them during their wilderness wandering.

- B. Thus, again, we have Paul's testimony of the pre-existent nature of Jesus Christ.
- C. Note the phrase "followed them" (10:4).
 - 1. This simply means that Christ accompanied Israel in the cloud through the wilderness and delivered them when they needed deliverance or help.
 - 2. In the same way, Christ is with his people today giving help and deliverance, when needed (cf. Heb. 2:18; Matt. 28:20b; Psa. 23).
 - 3. Paul makes it clear that Christ is the source of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).
 - 4. Three important things stand out as we look at Christ and Israel.
 - a. The entire nation of Israel received the benefits of Christ.
 - b. Those benefits were spiritual in nature.
 - c. Those benefits came from Jesus Christ.

IV. APPLICATION.

- A. The lessons set before us should enable us to become more aware of the marvelous privileges which we have in Christ Jesus.
- B. We have been delivered out of the bondage of sin as a result of the sacrificial death of Jesus (Rom. 6:1-7; 6:17-18).
- C. We have been baptized into Christ and are therefore, subject to his authority and leadership (Gal. 3:26-27; Eph. 5:24a).
- D. We are sustained by the spiritual blessings which are provided for us daily (Eph. 1:3; Heb. 4:14-16).
- E. We have the promise that even our physical needs will be supplied if we remain faithful to Christ (cf. Matt. 6:24-34; Phil. 4:19; Rom. 8:31-39).
- F. We should count our blessings lest we fall like the Israelites in the wilderness, because the same Christ who was with them is with his people today.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. The Israelites and the facts of their history are recorded for examples.
- 2. The same Lord directs our affairs that ordered theirs; and if we sin as they did, we too must expect to be punished and excluded from that eternal rest which awaits the faithful children of God.

QUESTIONS

- 1. What was the all-important truth symbolized by the fact that the Israelites under God, ALL passed under the cloud and ALL passed through the sea?

2. What was symbolized by the "manna" and "water" miraculously given to the Israelites in the wilderness?
 3. What eventually happened to almost all of the adults so gloriously delivered from Egypt?
 4. Why did Paul speak of Israel's overthrow in the wilderness just after he wrote of the possibility of his own failure? (9:27)
-

THE FISH AND THE HALF-SHEKEL

Matthew 17

Rick Knoll

1. Here we go again; another fish story!
 - a. This could be the response one might get from the title of this lesson.
 - b. After all, there is Jonah and the whale, Jonah 1:17-2:10
 - c. The great draught of fish, Luke 5:4-7.
 - d. The feeding of 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes, Matt. 14:17,21.
2. The story this time is – well – not so different.
 - a. Once again, we have the impulsive Peter.
 - b. Once again, we have our Savior teaching a deeper lesson(s) than what might first appear.
 - c. Once again, we have the Master Teacher demonstrating His power.
3. Matthew is the only writer to record this account.
4. There are a number of things that pique our interest.
 - a. What are some of the events which lead up to this miracle?
 - b. Who all is involved?
 - c. What was the reason behind paying the tribute anyway?
 - d. How do the events, which transpired, apply to us today and what do we learn?
 - e. Did the miracle actually occur?

DISCUSSION:

I. EVENTS WHICH LED UP TO THE LESSON TEXT.

- A. The transfiguration of Jesus before Peter, James and John. Matt. 17:1-8
 1. Jesus was changed before the three giving them a glimpse of the glory of the Savior.
 2. Moses and Elijah are representatives of "the law and the prophets."

3. The declaration of Jesus being the Son of God. Matt. 17:5
- B. While leaving the mountain, a discussion begins regarding Elias (Elijah), Matt. 17:9-13.
 1. Jesus instructs his disciples, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." v.9
 2. There is the confirmation that Elias would (Mal. 4:5) and did come first (Matt. 17:13) in the person of John the Baptist.
- C. Jesus heals the demoniac boy whom his disciples could not heal, Matt. 17:14-21.
 1. Jesus healed the boy that very hour; disciples could not because of their lack of faith.
 2. Prayer and fasting was required to cast out a strong demon of this type.
- D. Jesus foretells his death and resurrection, Matt. 17:22-23

II. THOSE INVOLVED IN THIS ACCOUNT (OUR TEXT).

- A. There is the impulsive Peter; he:
 1. Who made the confession previously that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God, Matt. 16:16ff.
 2. Who rebuked Jesus after being informed He (Jesus) would be killed and raised the third day, Matt. 16:22.
 3. Who declared that others might forsake Jesus but not he, only to deny him later, Matt. 26:33, 75.
 4. Who according to our text would answer those who collected the tribute without checking with Jesus first, vs.24, 25.
- B. Those who received the tribute money.
 1. They had the authority to collect the money.
 - a. The tribute tax was first instituted by Moses at the command of God, Exodus 30:11-16.
 - 1) It was a ransom for their soul, v.12.
 - 2) This was to be used for the upkeep of the temple.
 - 3) The half shekel was required of all men over the age of 20.
 - b. The same amount was required whether you were rich or poor, v.15.
 - 1) God is not a respecter of persons, Acts 10:34.
 - 2) Their souls were the same; therefore the ransom was the same.
 - 3) Just as Christ is the redeemer of all souls whether rich or poor.
 2. A half-shekel was worth approximately two days work of a common laborer.
 3. King Joash had commanded the tribute to be collected when he was minded to repair the house of the Lord, 2 Kings 1-18; 2 Chron. 24:1-14.

4. There was a debate between the Pharisees and the Sadducees as to whether the tribute was voluntary during the days of Christ.
- C. There was Jesus our Savior.
1. He was the Master Teacher who used every opportunity to teach.
 2. He would use parables, common sense information, everyday experiences, etc., to reinforce his teachings.
 3. Often He would use rhetorical questions or even silence to drive home His points.
 4. He spoke in such a way that He would command attention, Matt. 7:28, 29.

III. THE MIRACLE(S).

- A. The first miracle was Jesus knowing what Peter had answered the collectors, v.25.
1. Jesus showed His omniscience by knowing the accounting of the temple tax question before Peter had the opportunity to tell Him.
 2. Peter would learn Jesus was aware of what was going on even though He was not seen.
- B. The second miracle was Peter going fishing, v.27.
1. Normally you would expect Peter to go out in a ship with his nets to gather fish.
 2. This time he was instructed to go to the sea, cast a hook and the first fish caught would have the tax needed.
 3. Jesus demonstrated His omnipotence by bringing the right fish to Peter's hook.
 - a. Did the fish just happen to ignore the hook of all the other fishermen until Peter threw in his hook?
 - b. Was the fish just hanging around collecting metal objects?

IV. THE LESSONS LEARNED AND APPLICATION FOR US TODAY.

- A. Jesus is the Son of God and He confirmed it yet again.
1. He showed by reason and logic why He was not required to pay the temple tax.
 2. Being the Son of God exempted Him from having to pay.
 3. Once the deity of Christ is confirmed, Jesus instructs Peter to "Pay for Me and thee."
 4. The reason He paid however was so as not to offend the collectors/Jews.
 5. Jesus would once again forgo His right as the son of God.
 - a. He had no sin for which to atone, Heb. 4:15.
 - b. He was the Son of God and therefore not subject to the tribute, v.26.

- c. He simply continued to fulfill all righteousness, Matt. 3:15.
- B. We can conceal nothing from Christ, Matt. 10:36.
 1. Jesus knows everything there is to know about us, Eccl. 12:14.
 2. We will be judged by the things written in the Book of Life, Rev. 20:12.
 3. It would be better for us to just go ahead and walk in the light, 1John 1:7.
- C. We may have to sacrifice our right as a Christian so as not to cause one to stumble.
 1. Jesus did this through out His life on this earth.
 2. We are to walk in His steps, 1 Peter 2:21.
 3. We are not to use our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but be the servants of God, 1 Peter 2:16.
- D. We must utilize our skills and abilities to do what we can for the cause of Christ.
 1. Peter was required to go fishing.
 2. We are required to do many things as a Christian.
 - a. Spread the word.
 - b. Do our part in answering our prayers.
 - c. Support our brethren.
- E. We must be careful in our answers.
 1. Peter immediately answered the collectors about Jesus paying the tribute without checking first.
 2. How often are we ready to just blurt out answers to questions without knowing the proper answers?
 - a. We are to be ready with the correct answer, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - b. We must have the authority for what we do, Col. 3:17.
 - c. We must speak the truth in love, Eph. 4:15.

CONCLUSION:

1. No account of an event or miracle is ever insignificant.
2. Jesus had power to know all things as well as over nature.
3. The Savior used every opportunity to teach His disciples in preparation for their work.
4. Jesus, although exempt from paying the tribute money, paid anyway in order not to offend.
5. We too must be willing to wave our privileges to keep one from stumbling

QUESTIONS:

1. By what authority was the half-shekel temple tax collected? What was the means of payment?
2. In the house, with what three questions did Jesus present Peter before Peter could say what was on his mind?

3. In this event, how did Jesus demonstrate His omniscience and omnipotence?
 4. What reason did Jesus use for Peter to go pay the temple tax for "me and thee?"
 5. Since the text tells us Peter was instructed what to do, did he? How do we prove it?
-

FEET WASHED WITH TEARS

Luke 7

Ben Vick, III

1. A woman's love and contrition are displayed in the midst of a social gathering at Simon's house.
 - a. A woman, a sinner, enters Simon's house, and passes around to Jesus. Tears stream down her face and fall on Jesus' feet. She then dries Jesus' feet with her hair. She smothers his feet with kisses. Then she pours expensive ointment on his feet.
 - b. Simon sees all this while he is trying to decide if Jesus is a prophet, a true man of God.
2. The word sinner is synonymous with a harlot.
 - a. The Pharisees would not allow this sort of sinner to touch them.
 - b. Four feet was as close as they would get to such a woman.
 - c. Yet, Jesus allows this woman to kiss him.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE SETTING OF THIS ACCOUNT IS INTERESTING.

- A. In this chapter, there are five specific people who have varying degrees of confidence in Jesus:
 1. First, in Capernaum, a centurion immediately identifies Jesus as a man with God's authority as soon as he hears about him. (v.3)
 2. Second, in Nain when a woman saw Jesus raise her son from the dead, she knew he was a great prophet. (vs.11-17)
 3. Then John the Baptist was given verification of the Messiah when his servants were sent to Jesus and reported what they heard and seen. (v. 22)
 4. A Pharisee named Simon desired to spend time with Jesus with the intention of questioning and proving him (vs.36, 39)

5. A woman, a sinner, has complete confidence in Jesus.
- B. The eating customs that are used today are completely different from the customs way back in the 1st Century.
 1. Dinners took place in courtyard areas where guest and passers-by could mix and mingle.
 2. Eating took place in a reclined position with guests leaning on their left sides and their feet away from a low table.
 3. Pharisaical traditions prohibited the mingling of religious people with those in this woman's profession.

II. THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN SIMON AND THE SINNER ARE STRIKING:

- A. Simon was at the head of the table, judging Jesus and the sinner.
 1. He, along with other Pharisees, felt he was righteous and holy and the true guardian of heaven's law.
 2. Instead of feeling a need for Jesus, he felt Jesus needed him.
 3. He was busy heresy-hunting, nitpicking, judging and enforcing the law and traditions; but he neglected to measure his own life.
 4. His cold courtesy, almost a lack of courtesy toward Jesus, could have been because of contempt or fear.
 5. Simon sees the scene and assumes that Jesus is not a prophet because he allows himself to be in the presence of this harlot.
 - a. In Simon's mind, the world's dregs of society are not worthy of our time.
 - b. But before the throne of God, this penitent sinner was viewed differently.
 6. Simon made three mistakes:
 - a. He thought the woman was unpardonable and unpardoned; she was neither.
 - b. He thought Jesus was undiscerning and so ignorant of the woman's state; but Jesus was more acquainted with her situation than Simon could have ever been.
 - c. He thought he was in a right relationship with God; but he was actually further from God than the woman.
- B. The Sinner was at the feet of Jesus serving Him.
- C. The hospitality of the two in Jesus' presence:
 1. The water which Simon had failed to give was supplied by the tears of the sinner.
 2. The failure of Simon to show affection was compensated by the kisses of the woman.

3. Simon's failure to show his Guest honor was supplied by the woman's costly oil.

III. LOOK AT THE QUALITIES OF THE REGRETFUL SINNER:

- A. It reminds us of the attitude of Paul who said that he was "less than the least of all saints." (Eph. 3:8)
- B. There is nothing the sinner can do to earn the grace of Jesus; she was an unprofitable servant. (Luke 17:10)
- C. The vilest offender can come to God.
- D. Who carries a greater burden than this woman? (Matt. 11:28)

IV. THE SINNER HAD A SINGULAR FOCUS ON JESUS.

- A. She was an uninvited guest, but that did not allow customs of the day to prevent her from honoring Jesus.
 1. She put aside her own personal feelings and pride and entered Simon's house.
 2. She had blocked out the whisperers and haters and focused on Jesus. (Heb. 12:1-3; Rom. 8:37-39)
 3. Her knowledge of Jesus gave her courage.
- B. She had made her confession of her faith before men. (Matt. 10:32; John 9:22)

V. THE WOMAN WAS WILLING TO SERVE JESUS.

- A. Foot washing was not a luxurious job, but she stepped in and filled a need.
- B. This was an activity of great love, resulting from a moral cleansing (v.47)

CONCLUSION:

1. Do we have the same sense about sin that this woman had?
 - a. We must know what it means to be lost.
 - b. In order to obtain mercy and enjoy a relationship with Christ, the sinner must be sick of sin and anxious to have relief from its guilt and defilement.
 - c. Sin carries with it a great burden and debt, the sinner is bankrupt.
2. This account shows the dangers of a hand-me-down religion.
 - a. The reason we are not better and more grateful Christians is that we have not felt that we are lost.
 - b. Many have no personal convictions of their own and no guilt of their own.
 - c. Christians end up as Christians in number and name only.
 - d. Hand-me-down Christianity results in ingratitude and a serving Christ becomes a burden. (1 John 5:3)

3. Jesus will defend those who confess him. (Luke 7:40-48; Acts 7:55-56; Rev. 2:10-13)
4. The limit of the woman's service was the limit of her ability.
 - a. "All to Jesus I surrender."
 - b. Our service will be judged based on our talents and opportunities.

QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the different attitudes of the centurion (Luke 7:1-10), the widow of Nain and others at the raising of her son (Luke 7:11-16), John while in prison (Luke 7:19-23), Simon and the sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50).
2. How was it possible for the sinful woman to go into Simon's house?
3. How does this lesson teach us the importance of self-inspection (I Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5; Matt. 7:1-5)?
4. What are some potential reasons for Simon inviting Jesus to his house?
5. What did Jesus ultimately prove to both Simon and the sinner about himself?

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PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

2 Corinthians 12

Sidney White

1. The subject of "Paul's Thorn In The Flesh" is "a little more than a hint, revealed in terms tantalizingly brief, and described by enigmatical allusions which have puzzled men for centuries" (Coffman Comm., 2 Cor., p.480).
2. Paul's thorn in the flesh is "one of the mysteries of the Bible, which has remained so, despite the ingenious efforts of men to explain it" (Annual Lesson Comm., 1963, p.301).

3. It is not so important "what it was," but "how Paul dealt with it" and the lessons we can learn from the account of it.

DISCUSSION:

I. WHAT WAS PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH?

- A. For a list of ideas that have been expressed through the years, consult Coffman's Commentary on 2 Corinthians, pp.480-481.
- B. DeHoff Comm. p.116 – the thorn in the flesh was some painful, physical infirmity.
- C. E. H. Ijams – something spiritual, something inward, some form of consciousness sent by God to prick the bubble of any Pharisaic arrogance.
- D. Coffman – malignant opposition of secular Israel; humiliation and shame of his total and irreconcilable separation from the people he loved more than life; cf. Num.33:55.
- E. An interesting note here, some have said, "We don't know what it was, but it was..."

II. CONSIDER SOME DEFINITIONS AND THOUGHTS RELATIVE TO SOME OF THE TERMS AND PHRASES IN THE CONTEXT OF 2 CORINTHIANS 12.

- A. "Thorn" is defined as a stake or sharpened wooden shaft, which would serve as a reminder of Paul's earthly state, to balance his earthly and heavenly thoughts.
- B. "Buffet" suggests "the continual repetition of blows struck with a closed fist."
- C. "In the flesh" suggests something for the inconvenience of the flesh. Some suggest since flesh is mentioned, they conclude some physical infirmity; yet Gal. 5:19; 1 John 2:15-17; Rom.8:1.
- D. "Exalted above measure" simply means "exalted overmuch".
- E. "Messenger of Satan" shows the effort of Satan to annoy, pain, depress, and harass Paul with the hope of hindering his work.
- F. "Grace sufficient" is the strength to bear the burden.
- G. "Visions and revelations" (plural) is a reference to special situations in which Paul had been placed by God that could have caused self-exaltation (vs.2ff, one such situation, and then comment of v.7)
- H. "Gladly glory" is a phrase that shows Paul's complete submission to the will of God.

III. CONSIDER THE PURPOSE OF PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH AS STATED CLEARLY IN VERSE 7.

- A. The reason stated is "lest I be exalted above measure".

- B. He could be exalted above measure because of the abundance of the revelations and visions he had received.
 - C. Paul was a man of goodness and humility (didn't even write about being caught up into the 3rd heaven until 14 yrs. later), but still a man who could be tempted, and could yield to those temptations and lose his own soul (1 Cor.9:27; Rom.7:14ff).
 - D. Rom.8:28 was written by Paul, which shows his understanding of such matters.
 - E. He learned to live and labor under whatever circumstances God's providence had determined.
 - F. The higher the privileges of grace and apostleship, the more necessary was his realization of utter dependence on the Lord.
- IV. HOW DID PAUL DEAL WITH HIS THORN IN THE FLESH?**
- A. Prayer — "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me" (v.8).
 - 1. Like Hezekiah who laid the matter before the Lord; 2 Kings.19:14.
 - 2. Burdens should drive us "to" God, not "from" God.
 - 3. The Lord heard and supplied the necessary strength (cf. Heb. 5:7;
 - 4. Prayer is not a complaint about our lot in life.
 - B. He determined to do the will of the Lord regardless of the cost; in this case, the continuing thorn in the flesh.
 - C. He realized, though weak in himself, he was strong in the Lord (v.9b).
- V. WHAT ARE SOME LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS THORN?**
- A. The Christian life is to bring glory to God. It is not "about us".
 - 1. The Christian life is to glorify God (1 Peter 4:11).
 - 2. The power of Christ upon Paul and us. Eph. 3:20
 - 3. With the thorn, Paul could become what he could not without it; that is, the dwelling place of the power of Christ.
 - 4. "Takes pleasure." v.10
 - B. There is a need for spiritual discipline.
 - 1. Pride – a great spiritual evil – good men sometimes have great temptation of pride.
 - 2. The mode of spiritual discipline can be very painful.
 - 3. The means of spiritual discipline is sometimes misunderstood.

4. The support we have for spiritual discipline is always abundant.
- C. God's grace is sufficient for whatever the circumstance (v.9).
 1. There is no verse to supply more strength and comfort to the child of God than this verse. (revealed in God's word and seen in Paul's actual experience).
 2. This grace is accessible to the weak, the feeble, the tempted, the overburdened Christian who cries to God for help (Matt.7:7-8).
 3. The need for the all-sufficient grace is evident:
 4. The basis of this grace:
 5. The evidence of this grace is seen in the personal experience of Paul (as well as others recorded in inspired history).

CONCLUSION:

1. In spite of so many who are sure what the thorn in Paul's flesh was, we do not know what it was.
2. But we do know how Paul dealt with it.
3. We all have difficulties, some more serious than others in our own lives. To deal with them as Paul dealt with his would be wise indeed.

QUESTIONS

1. Research and list some of the ideas as to what Paul's thorn in the flesh was and explain why they have been suggested.
 2. Explain the significance of "buffet" as used in this text, and how this same principle could/should apply to us today.
 3. State the reason for Paul's thorn as stated in the context, and then discuss any application for us today. Is pride really a problem today?
 4. State three things involved in Paul's dealing with his thorn in the flesh.
 5. Discuss at least three lessons that we can learn from this experience in Paul's live.
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THOU SHALT SEE MY BACK

Exodus 33

Charles Blair

1. Belief in God must always rest on solid evidence (Heb. 11:1).
2. Without such faith one cannot please God (verse 6).
3. In this study we shall consider the need of man to have a secure belief in the existence of God as it relates to how man sees God. May God bless our study together.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE BACKGROUND TO CHAPTER 33 AND MOSES' REQUEST TO SEE GOD ACTUALLY BEGINS BACK IN CHAPTER 32.

- A. Moses had been up on the mountain for 40 days receiving the commands from God.
- B. While there the people grew impatient, and came to Aaron and desired for him to make them "gods, which shall go before us" (Exodus 32:1).
 1. One might reason that the influence of the Egyptian world they had left behind was a continuing powerful influence over their lives.
 2. Whatever the cause, they speak to a common idea always among mankind.
 3. That is a desire to "see" the god one worships.
 4. If you cannot see him, then how do you know he exists?
- C. Aaron made the golden calf out of the materials which the people brought.
 1. Their plans were to have a day of worship toward the Lord (Exodus 32:5).
 2. It began early in the morning with sacrifices and ended with the people rising up to play by dancing and losing their clothes and inhibitions.
- D. We come the 77ⁿ to chapter 33, after God had dealt with the people and their quick journey back to idolatry.
 1. God says to Moses that this is a "stiffnecked people" (Exodus 33:3).
 2. Something else, which God declared in this same verse, is that He would not go up in the midst of them.
 3. They had arrived at this point because God led them by a pillar of the cloud by day and by a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21,22).
 4. When the people heard these words, they mourned. They knew they needed the leadership of God (Exodus 33:4).

- E. Moses sets up a tabernacle outside of the camp. The instructions for the tabernacle that Moses was to build had not been given at this point. Hence, this was a tent set up to allow Moses and God to communicate, since God would not go up in the midst of them (Exodus 33:7; and verse 3).
1. Now we observe the reaction of the people.
 2. When Moses went to the tent outside the camp, all the people stood at the door of their tent until Moses went inside (Exodus 33:8).
 3. Moses goes inside and the cloudy pillar stands at the door of the tent. When they "saw" this, they rose up and worshiped, every man at his own tent door (Exodus 33:10).
 4. They wanted to see God's presence to know that everything was all right.

II. WE NOW MOVE TO THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN MOSES AND GOD WHICH BEARS ON THE CONCERN BOTH OF MOSES AND THE PEOPLE:

- A. Moses desires proof that God is with them and that the Hebrews are His special people (Exodus 33:13).
1. This is not foreign thinking to righteous or unrighteous people.
 2. Individuals desire to know that God accepts them.
 3. The cloud by day and night assured them of God's leadership. Moses wants to be sure that God still cares for them after the balking at the Red Sea and the matter of false worship with the golden calf.
- B. God then assures Moses that His presence will be with him and lead him to rest (Exodus 33:14).
1. What a wonderful thing to be able to hear from God. Let us all understand, however, that there were over 600,000 men who left Egypt, not counting women and children (Exodus 12:37).
 2. Of such a large number, to how many did God speak? Moses is the only one.
 3. Yes, it was a wonderful thing for Moses to hear God's voice and receive the assurance but no one else was a recipient of this great blessing.
- C. Moses then replies to God: "Do not carry us any further, if Thou will not be with us."
1. Moses is seeking for that assurance that God will be with them, otherwise there is no point of going any further.
 2. If man has lost the assurance of God's presence, how does he go any further?
- D. Now Moses moves to the position of absolute proof.
1. He asks of God to "let me see Thy glory" (Exodus 33:18).

2. God states that He will allow Moses to see but only His back and not His front.
3. That was God's decision and God was doing what was best for Moses.
4. When Moses was allowed to see the back of God, what he saw was the goodness of God (Exodus 33:19).
5. Involved in that view of God's glory was God being gracious and merciful to whom He would show mercy.
6. Are we then to wonder if God will bestow mercy and grace to us?
7. How do we know if God is with us or not?

III. AT THIS POINT IN OUR STUDY, LET'S FOCUS IN ON THE WORDS, "MIRACLES, WONDERS AND SIGNS."

- A. Jesus was approved before the world by God the Father through miracles, wonders and signs (Acts 2:22).
 1. If Jesus had been just a "good man" with no power, the world would not be challenged to know Who He was (and is).
 2. John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the One or should they be looking for someone else? (Matt. 11:2,3).
 3. Jesus answer was that the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, deaf hear, the dead are raised.
 4. No man could do these things unless God was working with Him.
 5. Jesus was declared to the world to be the Son of God with power, when He was raised from the dead.
- B. The work of the apostles in the early part of the book of Acts was likewise a demonstration of power.
 1. Even those men who are the known enemies of Jesus could not deny that a notable miracle had occurred, that is the healing of the lame man in Acts 3. (Acts 4:16)
 2. Luke writes that it was with great power that the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:33).
 3. The death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 caused great fear to come on the church and all who heard of the demonstration of power. (Acts 5:11)
 4. Luke tells us in the next verse that many signs and wonders were wrought among the people by the apostles (Acts 5:12).
 5. Such continued until the apostles laid their hands on the seven in Acts 6:6.
 6. We learn that by this act of the laying on of the apostles' hands, that power was given unto men (Acts 8:18).

7. Philip, one of the seven in Acts 6, received power to perform miracles but he could not pass it on to others. Only the apostles had that power.
- C. The mind-set for so many today is they see God in "miracles, wonders and signs" and they want to be able to "see" that demonstration of power.
1. Let us take a moment and consider the first reaction of Gideon when he came in contact with an angel.
 2. The angel says to Gideon, "The Lord is with thee" (Judges 6:12).
 3. Gideon, hearing these words, raises some questions.
 - a. If God is with us, then why have all these bad things (through the Midianites) happened unto us?
 - b. Where are all the miracles our fathers have told us about? (Judges 6:13)
 - c. Do we see the issue for him and for many of our day? If there is a God, why do we not see Him in His actions toward mankind.

IV. IMAGINE A PAINTING BEFORE YOU OF ALL KINDS OF COLOR AND THE WORDS, MIRACLES WONDERS AND SIGNS IN BOLD BLACK LETTERS; NOW FURTHER IMAGINE IN THE BACKGROUND, THE WORDS: I SHOW YOU A MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

- A. Paul, in his discussion with the Corinthians about the supernatural gifts from God, he reveals that God is about to show them a more excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31).
1. What could be better than the power of God being shown in an open and public way for all to see?
 2. Paul argues that when he was a child, that he thought like a child but when he became a man, he put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:11).
 3. The childish things represented the gifts as seen in verse 8, of the chapter.
 4. The time was coming when the power would move from inspired men to an inspired book (1 Cor. 13:10).
- B. Let us take a moment and contemplate what it was like for them in the first century.
1. There was a demonstration of the power of God in certain one's lives (that is those on whom the apostles laid their hands).
 2. Let me ask, why was there a meeting held in Acts 15 about whether or not the Gentiles had to keep the law of Moses?
 3. The meeting took place because the Word of God was being revealed slowly.

4. All such major concerns about spiritual questions had to be resolved by those who had spiritual power.
 5. 1 Corinthians chapter 7 is a view of this very thing.
- C. Where are we today?
1. We engage in a study of God's Word to find His acceptance (2 Tim. 2:15).
 2. The more we study, the easier it becomes to distinguish between good and evil (Heb. 5:14).
 3. As our knowledge increases, we are better able to answer those who ask us about our faith in God (1 Peter 3:15).
 4. If there are miracles, wonders and signs, then the Bible is not complete and we are continuing to get messages from God today.
 5. If "knowledge has ceased" (1 Cor. 13:8), then miracles are no longer needed.

V. LOOK CLOSELY AT THE HEART OF MEN TODAY AND ASK WHY IT IS THAT THEY CANNOT "SEE" GOD?

- A. When Moses saw the back of God, he saw the goodness of God, the name of God and grace and mercy (Exodus 33:19).
1. May we "see" God today?
 2. Grace reigns today through righteousness (Rom. 5:21).
 3. Not man's self-made righteousness, but righteousness which comes from God (Rom. 10:3; Titus 3:5).
 4. The righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:17).
 5. Yes, men today can "see" God if they know where to look!
- B. The Galatians had become Christians by putting on Christ (Gal. 3:27).
1. Paul was concerned because they were leaving the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 3:1).
 2. He then argues that Jesus Christ was evidently (through evidence) set forth, crucified among them. Did he mean that Jesus was crucified in the region of Galatia?
 3. No, he meant that by the preaching of the Gospel, it was as if they had "seen" the Lord crucified.

CONCLUSION:

1. We can see God today through His written Word. Every thing we need to know, God has revealed. Our task is to stay in the Word and keep it in our hearts that each day we may see the Lord through that precious Book Divine.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is our relationship with God based on evidence?
2. Why do men need to "see" God?

3. What impact has idolatry had on the minds of people in Moses' day and why is it still a problem today as men seek to find God?
4. What impact does "Miracles, wonders and signs" have on the minds of people as they strive to find God?
5. Why is the written Word a more excellent way than the way of having a demonstration of God's power through miracles?

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