

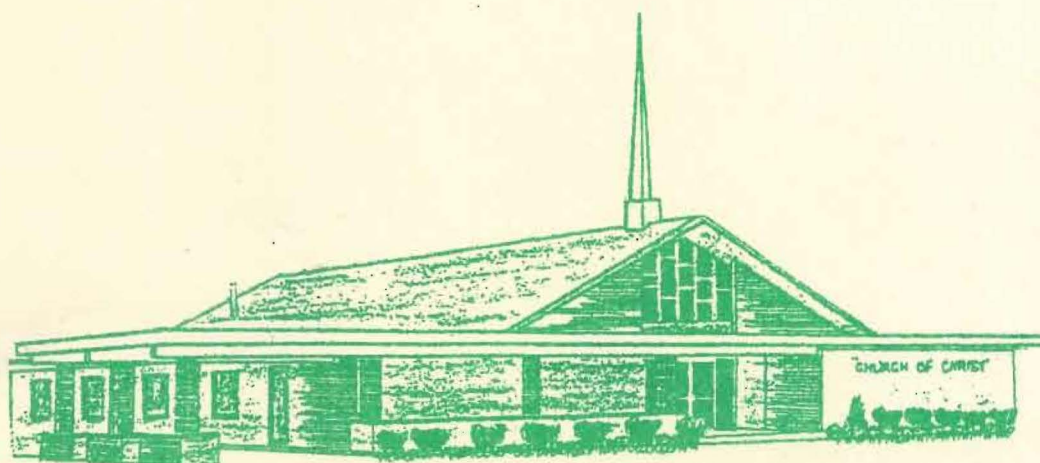
2000

**West Virginia Christian
Lectures**

September 17 – 20

"Thus Saith The Lord"

Jeremiah 6:16



Mannington Church of Christ
706 East Main Street
P.O. Box 107
Mannington, WV 26582

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"Thus Saith The Lord"

Jeremiah 6:16

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WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN
Rt 5 Box 1468
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Albert E. Farley, editor

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"Thus Saith The Lord"

Hear The Gospel - *Romans 10:17; Acts 18:8*

Believe That Jesus Is Christ - *John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6*

Repent Of Sins - *Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9*

Confess Jesus As Christ - *Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10*

Be Baptized (Immersed) Into Christ For The Remission Of Sins

Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; Romans 6:3-5; I Peter 3:20-21

Walk In Newness Of Life - *Romans 6:3-5; I John 1:7; Revelation 2:10*

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August 19, 2000

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LECTURESHIP SCHEDULE

Winford Claiborne will speak
SUNDAY, September 17, 9:00 A.M., 10:00 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.

MONDAY – September 18

10:00 to 10:50 A.M.	Moral Issues – Church	Roger Rush	Jer. 5:31
11:00 to 11:50	Grace and Mercy	Steve Snider	Jer. 31:3; 33:11
1:30 to 2:20	Word of God	Nick Deiger	Jer. 36; 23
2:30 to 3:20	New Covenant	Keith Ball	Jer. 31:31-34
6:30 P.M.	SINGING		
7:00	Winford Claiborne		

TUESDAY – September 19

10:00 to 10:50 A.M.	Moral Issues – Nation	Terry Jones	Jer. 7:28
11:00 to 11:50	Hope in Christ	Albert Farley	Jer. 17:7, 8
1:30 to 2:20	Restoration Plea	John Brown	Jer. 6
2:30 to 3:20	Church Leadership	Mike Reese	Jer. 23:1-4
6:30 P.M.	SINGING		
7:00	Winford Claiborne		

WEDNESDAY – September 20

10:00 to 10:50 A.M.	Moral Issues – Home	Steve Higginbotham	Jer. 3:25; 22:13
11:00 to 11:50	Work of Christ	Charles Pugh	Jer. 20; 33
1:30 to 2:20	True Repentance	Randy Cook	Jer. 26:13
2:30 to 3:20	Work of the Prophet/ Preacher	Jim Farley	Jer. 1:7 ff; 23:28
6:30 P.M.	SINGING		
7:00	Winford Claiborne		

Preface

We send forth this series of lessons with great joy and with earnest prayer. We are thankful to be a part of this first WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN LECTURESHIP and pray that God will richly bless the lessons that will be presented in the Mannington church of Christ building, printed in this lectureship book, and published in the special September issue of WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN.

When the elders of the Mannington congregation, Ab Cole, Pete Cole, and Ed Wright, – with their preacher, Mike Reese, - met on June 21, 1999, with my brother, James Farley, and me to discuss the plans for this lectureship, one of the first proposals that they proposed and that we discussed and eagerly adopted was the theme: “Thus Saith the Lord.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

Another decision from that first meeting was to publish the lectures in book form and to offer them without charge to all who attended the sessions. The assignment was given to me to receive the manuscripts and outlines from our speakers, and to edit, compose, and to print them.

All of our speakers and writers have admirably fulfilled our requests of them in a wonderful way. All of the manuscripts and lessons we received were very well written and prepared, and it has been a joy to edit them for publication. The manuscripts from brother Winford Claiborne are transcripts from six of his radio messages that were originally broadcast on the ***International Gospel Hour***.

Our proposal is that this lectureship be a “traveling” lectureship – held at various locations and under the oversight of different elderships throughout the state each year. We believe that great blessings can be received from such an annual event – as has been proven by the wonderful **Ohio Valley Lectureship** that has served the cause of Jesus Christ in our area so well for many, many years.

Our prayer is that God will richly bless this lectureship. May it bring great honor and glory to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ! May it bring all of us closer to Him and to one another in our doing His Holy Will in the church!

Albert E. Farley, editor

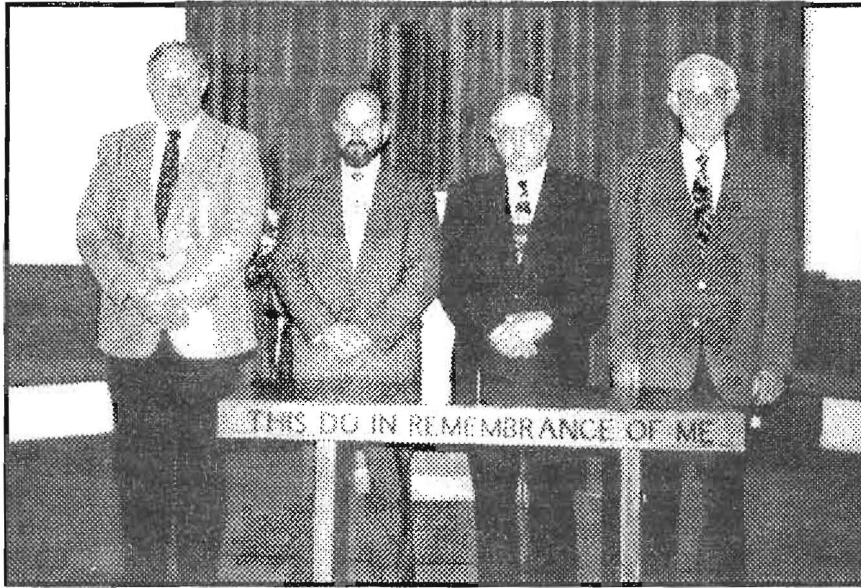
Acknowledgements

The success in the planning and in the conducting of this series of lectures is by the grace of Almighty God. We hereby acknowledge His great Goodness and Mercy upon us and give unto Him our sincere praise and thanksgiving through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is also the result of the efforts of many, many people. It would not be possible to list everyone because we do not know the things all have done. However, we do wish to express our appreciation to some who we know have been especially helpful.

- 1. The Mannington elders, Ab Cole, Pete Cole, and Ed Wright, and their preacher, Mike Reese.** All of our planning meetings were a pure delight (especially when sister Jean prepared and served supper!)
- 2. The Mannington church of Christ, and their secretary, Barbara Cole.** We will always be indebted to them for being the first congregation to host our lectureship. We thank the members who worked in putting the lectureship book together, in folding and sorting the WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN papers which were sent into the community, and in the many other ways they have supported the lectures throughout the week.
- 3. The speakers and writers.** Their patience and forbearance of my editing of this book will ever be remembered and appreciated.
- 4. Jean Cole and all of the women from Mannington and area congregations** who planned, prepared, and served the lunches each day of the lectureship.
- 5. The Pikeville, Kentucky, church of Christ, and their secretary, Linda Farley.** Through their generosity, our lectureship books were printed on their office equipment.
- 6. The Pennsboro church of Christ** whose contribution toward the cost of the lectureship book was considerable and unsolicited.
- 7. Bobby Jennings,** who prepared the Biographical section of our book.
- 8. Nancy and Elisabeth Farley.** Their capable abilities in proofreading our writings were invaluable.

A STATEMENT FROM THE ELDERS



Merle "Pete" Cole, Michael Reese (preacher), Edwin Wright and Albert "Ab" Cole

THUS SAITH THE LORD 2000

Woe to this crooked and perverse generation whose children devour one another with their words, knives, and guns; who have no respect for the powers over them, for each other, or even themselves. We of the "Churches of Christ" firmly believe the answer to this country's woes is a return to a "Thus Saith The Lord!" God's word has all the answers if we will but humble ourselves and submit to His Will that is plainly taught in the Bible.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Matthew 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22: 37-39 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Mark 8: 34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 5: 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

This is what the world is looking for: the acceptance of God, their maker, and his unchanging love. He has a plan for us - not only a great plan of Salvation, but also a plan for our daily lives. He wants us to be happy and content with the blessings that he has given us.

We invite you to study with us, that we might be refined, rededicated, and renewed - that we will embrace the simple Word of Truth that was taught so long ago, and that is alive and well in the hearts of His children. Our prayer is that we might take God's Word to a Lost and Dying Generation. We want our friends and our friends' friends to know God's Will for themselves and their families. Our hope is that this country will once again be a nation of believers, and that we will care what "Thus Saith The Lord" tells us. Please study with us and be the Light to this crooked and perverse generation that God has called us to be.

Will you go back with us to the "Old Paths" and teach your neighbors of God's plan?

Sincerely,

Albert "Ab" Cole 986 2771

Merle "Pete" Cole 334-6796

Edwin Wright 986-1131

PREACHING THE GOSPEL WITHOUT OFFENDING ANYONE

Winford Claiborne

Have you ever been offended by what some preacher said from the pulpit or on radio? Did you go to him afterward and ask him why he could not preach the gospel without offending people? I hope you understand that preachers, generally speaking, have no intention of hurting anyone's feelings. If we do so because of our poor selection of words or our attitudes or the tone of our voices we should apologize for those blunders and strive with God's help not to be guilty anymore.

I believe strongly that what Jesus said in Matthew 10:16 applies especially to gospel preachers. Jesus said to the twelve, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Is there any way on earth a man can preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth and not offend someone? If I preach the whole counsel of God, those who do not want to hear it will likely be offended. If I do not preach the whole counsel of God, my Lord and those who want to hear it will be offended. There is not any way to keep from offending someone if we follow the example of the great prophets of the Old Testament and the great preachers of the New.

Will you please give attention today to our study of the topic "Preaching the Gospel Without Offending Anyone." The prophet Isaiah lived about 750 years before Jesus Christ entered the world. Dr. George Robinson calls Isaiah the king of all the prophets. Edmon Burke, the outstanding English statesman, habitually read from the prophecies of Isaiah before going to Parliament.

Isaiah was a great statesman who consulted on a regular basis with the kings of Israel. His writings, stylistically, linguistically, and spiritually are among the greatest ever penned by mortal man. Even in an age of secularism and materialism, the writings of Isaiah still exert a powerful influence in our world. Reading his great book provides an uplifting and challenging experience. We would know so much less about God if we were bereft of Isaiah's prophecy.

Do you believe the following passages from Isaiah were offensive to the Jews? "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people do not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children who are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,

they are gone away backward” (Isa. 1:3-4). Later in the same chapter, Isaiah wrote: “How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water: your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: everyone loves gifts, and follows after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come unto them” (Isa. 1:21-23). Were these words - from a modern viewpoint - designed to win friends and to influence people?

Isaiah 5 tells of the parable of the wild grapes. The Lord planted a vineyard - the nation of Israel - and looked for it to bring forth grapes, but it brought forth wild or rotten grapes. Isaiah describes the kind of fruit the vineyard of the Lord had produced. “Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands” (Isa. 5:11-12). Later in the same chapter Isaiah wrote: “Woe unto them who call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them who are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: who justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him” (Isa. 5:20-23).

We know enough about Isaiah to understand how painful it must have been for him to have to speak in such a manner to his own people. If you have read his prophetic writings, you know he was a very sensitive man - a man in love with God and with God's people. If you know human nature, you know some of the Israelites almost certainly said, “If Isaiah really loved us as he claims to, he would not speak in that way. He has embarrassed me and the people of God. Why does he have to be so offensive?” Please remember that the true prophets of God were not speaking from their own hearts; they were speaking the very words of God. God had said to Moses several hundred years before Isaiah began his prophetic ministry: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Dt. 18:18). If the Jews were offended at Isaiah's preaching, it was not the prophet's fault. He was speaking for God - delivering God's message in God's words to God's people.

How do you think the Israelites - especially the prophets and priests - reacted to these caustic words from Jeremiah: “My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunk man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of the Lord, and because

of words of his holiness. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourns; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right" (Jer. 23:9-10)? Perhaps you have forgotten how they treated this great man of God. "Then they took Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire" (Jer. 38:6).

Zedekiah had placed the prophet Jeremiah in a prison, but he wanted to consult the prophet to learn what would happen to the nation. He sent men to the prison and had him brought to the king. Zedekiah asked Jeremiah secretly, "Is there any word from the Lord?" And Jeremiah said, "There is: for, said he, you shall be delivered unto the hands of the king of Babylon. Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I done to offend you, or your servants, or this people, that you have put me in prison? Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against the land?" (Jer. 37:17-19).

The false prophets had been assuring king Zedekiah and the Israelite people that the king of Babylon would not march against the nation and carry the Jews into captivity. Obviously, that was what the king and the Israelites wanted to hear. They were not offended by the message of the false prophets. But when Jeremiah told them the truth, they were offended and put him in a dungeon. Earlier in the book, Jeremiah had spoken of the prophets who were saying, "You shall have peace; and they say unto everyone who walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you" (Jer. 23:17).

When Jeremiah warned the Israelites of the evil which would befall them, they were very angry. Some of the leaders among the Jews accused Jeremiah of falling away to the Chaldeans (Jer. 37:13). In other words, because he had revealed God's words about the future of the nation, they accused him of treason. Were they offended by Jeremiah's preaching? If the prophet had wanted to be popular, he would not have preached so strongly and uncompromisingly. But Jeremiah was more interested in pleasing God than in being popular with the Jews or with anyone else. What a powerful example Jeremiah is for every preacher who wants to help people and to have God's approval!

Time will not permit any further discussion of the other great prophets of the Old Testament, men like Elijah, Micaiah, Amos, Micah, Malachi and Daniel. Suffice it to say that these men would not be remembered and honored as God's faithful servants if they had tried to avoid offending their

hearers. We know these men were dedicated to serving God by preaching the messages he had given them. If the messages offended anyone, it was not their fault - but God's. They had no choice - if they wanted God's approval - but to preach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I pray that God will raise up some Isaiahs and Jeremiahs and Elijahs for our day. When he does - if he does - they will not be able to represent God without offending some.

Now for a few minutes let us turn to the greatest preacher, prophet, priest, and king - the Lord Jesus Christ. As a preacher, Jesus said to the people who had seen his great miracles and had not believed: "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30). As a prophet, Jesus predicted the time when the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the ungodliness and rebellion of the Jewish nation (Mt. 24 & Luke 21). As our high priest, Jesus was tempted in all points just as we are (Heb. 4:15). He was and is the king of peace.

Isaiah wrote as follows concerning the coming Messiah. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:1-4). The apostle Matthew quoted these words from Isaiah 42 and applied them to Jesus (Mt. 12:17-21).

In view of the fact that Jesus was meek and lowly, wept over his own city, entered into our feelings and experiences, and is the Prince of peace, how could he ever offend anyone? In the very chapter where Jesus claimed to be meek and lowly, Jesus severely criticized the Jews who had heard him preach the message of God's kingdom and had seen the spectacular miracles he had performed. Will you listen carefully and decide whether or not his words angered and offended the Jews? "Then he began to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto you, Chroazin, woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto

you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment until this day" (Mt. 11:20-24).

Would anyone be so foolish as to accuse the Son of God of not caring about the people to whom he spoke? "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Virtually every sermon Jesus preached offended someone. Why would he subject himself to ridicule and abuse if he did not love men enough to come to this earth to suffer and to die for us? "For even here unto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps ... Who in his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:21, 24).

John 8 records one of the most intense conversations between Jesus and some Jewish leaders. Jesus told the Jews: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." They told him that they were Abraham's seed and had never been in bondage to any man. Jesus did not deny their physical connection to Abraham, but he denied their spiritual relationship to him. He said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this Abraham did not do. You do the deeds of you father." They assured Jesus that they were not born of fornication. They claimed to have one Father, God almighty. Now please listen carefully to our Lord's response to the Jews' claim to be God's children. "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you believe not" (John 8:32-45).

You know without any doubt that Jesus was striving to awaken the Jews to their rebellion against God's law. The Jews were his own people. He was not trying to hurt them or to anger them. But he could not have been faithful to God without telling them of their sinfulness. Were they offended by what Jesus said to them? The divine record says: "Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (John 8:59). Could Jesus have been a little less abrasive in his condemnation of the Jews? My friends, Jesus knew what the Jews were thinking. He could not have approached them in any other way. His goal always was to seek and to save the lost (Lk. 19:10), but sometimes that meant a frontal attack against the enemies of God almighty. We do not know men's motivations, but we can know when false doctrine is being preached or when men are behaving in

immoral ways. If we want to be faithful to God's calling, we will oppose all false teaching and all immoral behavior. Even if it offends the hearers? Even if it offends the whole world.

There are many other incidents in the life of Jesus Christ which deserve our time and attention, but let us turn for just a few minutes to the preaching of the apostle Paul. Do you know how much Paul loved his hearers and readers - both Jews and Gentiles? He said to his own people: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). Does that sound to you as if this great man of God was anti-Semitic, as John Shelby Spong argues? Earlier in that same epistle Paul had written about the Jews: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). But he no doubt offended the Jews when he wrote: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3).

As you know if you have studied the Bible carefully, 1 Corinthians is one of the most caustic letters in the New Testament. Paul warned them of the danger of their being lost if they did not repent. But in his second letter, he tells them of his deep love for them. "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved" (2 Cor. 12:14-15). Were the Corinthians offended by Paul's first letter? How could there be any doubt about it? They were made to see how they had sinned against God. Their godly sorrow led them to repentance (2 Cor. 6:10). If we want men and women to turn to God, we have to preach his word faithfully - not intending to offend - but to bring about salvation.

POLITICAL SOLUTIONS TO SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

Winford Claiborne

A great number of Americans - I would hope a majority - are deeply concerned about moral and spiritual conditions in the United States. We know about the enormous increase in the consumption of alcohol, the use of illegal drugs and the abuse of prescription drugs, the millions and millions of babies who have been aborted in the past twenty-three years, and about the practice of perverted sex. We also know about the scandal of divorce in our nation and the millions of children who are deprived of one parent and, in some cases, of both parents. We understand to some extent the breakdown in our criminal court system. Thousands of vicious criminals are being released from our prison system to kill, rape, and plunder. Many judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys seem to have little interest in justice. They just want to win.

If you read the papers regularly or if you listen to prominent politicians - either on television or on radio - you have heard hundreds of solutions to the problems we face in this country. Every politician - especially if he happens to be running for office at the time - has the solution to whatever problems exist - even if he has no idea what is going on. The media also have solutions - generally the same that liberal politicians have. The American Civil Liberties Union knows what to do about every ill which plagues society. In addition to the combined wisdom of politicians, the media and the American Civil Liberties Union, liberal professors in our colleges and universities have the proper approach to teenage pregnancy, to the breakup of the home, and to other tragic situations in this country.

The proposals of the groups I have mentioned have been tried for years. For example, the political, educational, and media people have spoken in somber tones of the increase in teenage pregnancies - not that they are concerned about human life - but the increase in out-of-wedlock pregnancies has placed this nation in an precarious financial condition.

If they were truly concerned about human life, they would support a ban on abortion and other attacks against the sacredness of all human life. But to remedy the tragedy of teenage pregnancies, the liberal establishment has pressured the government to require sex education at all levels of schooling - from kindergarten through the university. Where those recommendations have been followed - and they have been in several jurisdictions - more teens have gotten pregnant. Young people in most cases have been taught the mechanics of sex but without any moral values. The young people have

not been taught to abstain from sexual activity until they were married but to be careful so as not to contract a venereal disease or to have a child outside marriage. Are young people so dumb or naive that they do not get the message our government is sending? They are being told, in effect, it is not wrong to have sex outside marriage, but do be careful.

Apparently the majority of liberal politicians, university professors and even some theologians are striving to solve America's moral and spiritual problems by political and pragmatic measures. Whenever serious situations arise in the United States, we pressure our political leaders to pass new legislation or new regulations or throw billions of dollars at the problem. In many cases the new legislation or the new regulations make little difference in the nation's moral tone. In some cases, such as our vain attempts to end poverty, the conditions are worse because of the political solutions.

My friends, I am not arguing against changes in our laws - when they need changing. I certainly am not suggesting that we should not vote or be concerned about what occurs in our state capitals and in Washington. If we are disturbed about a proposed piece of legislation, we should speak out against any activity or person which will lead to a deterioration of our moral values. If a candidate for office - any office - is a liar, an adulterer, an abortion supporter, or a feminist, please use your vote to make a difference in our country. Yes, dear friends, adultery is a legitimate political issue.

I believe Christians have an obligation to use their time and talent to work in every legitimate way for the betterment of our communities and of our nation. But there are many ways to accomplish worthy goals other than by political means. In fact, it is my strong conviction that spiritual and moral problems cannot be solved by political measures. O, we definitely need laws which prohibit racial and other forms of discrimination, but the laws alone will not remove racism. Dr. Martin Luther King fully understood that truth, but he worked for laws which would keep little children in an Alabama church from being killed by racists. He wanted and we should want to give all men and women equal opportunities to achieve their life's goals.

If spiritual problems cannot be solved by political means, where can solutions be found? The answer to that question will occupy the remainder of our time today. The place to start in preventing teenage pregnancies, stopping the cruel practice of killing babies in their mothers' wombs, destroying illicit drug traffic in the United States, and discouraging illegitimate discrimination is the home. You heard me right, dear friends. The place to start in opposing evil and supporting good is the home. When the home fails in its God-given responsibilities, the other institutions of society are not likely to succeed.

Kay James is Secretary of Health and Human Services for the state of Virginia. She served in the White House during the Bush administration and has been a spokesperson for the National Right to Life Committee. Her new book, Transforming America from the Inside Out (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), has a great amount of valuable information on the family's influence on society. She and her husband were invited to the former Soviet Union to speak about families. One of the Russian leaders told Kay James that their economic system could not work without honest, strong, and good people. Making contracts in the business place would be useless unless people honor those contracts. The Russian leader had tried to instill values through the state and through the government, but all his efforts had failed. "There is only one place," he said, "where such values can be taught: the family" (p. 59).

If families are going to help in the solution of the moral and spiritual problems we face, they must make sure their children are taught biblical moral values. Parents must exemplify the principles they want to see practiced in their children's lives. Kay James tells the story of one of America's and the world's best neurosurgeons, Dr. Ben Carson, who at the age of thirty-three was Chief of Pediatric Neurology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Dr. Carson grew up in a neighborhood where violence of all kinds proliferated. His mother had to work at two or three jobs to keep her children fed and clothed. She forbade her children to watch television except two or three times per week and only if they had read and completed two book reports. Ben Carson resented his mother's rules but soon began to be excited by what he was reading. Ben Carson was admitted to Yale University and to the University of Michigan. Dr. Carson credits his mother and his education for his attainments (pp. 91-92).

If we are going to solve our spiritual problems, we must have radical changes in some of America's homes. Our children must be taught the differences between right and wrong. They must be taught that there are absolutes. Otherwise, they will make moral decisions on the spur of the moment. Children need to see in their homes parents who are devoted to each other and to their children. One prominent writer says very succinctly and very truthfully, "The best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother." Children must see in their parents what it means to be a husband and wife, a father and a mother. The father should be a model of what it means to be a husband and a father. The mother obviously has similar responsibilities.

The duties of parents in teaching their children could hardly be more emphatically stated than in these words from God to Moses. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might. And

these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart: and you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates" (Dt. 6:4-9). The New Testament says very simply, "And, you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

The government should not be in the business of trying to rear the nation's children. God has made it plain through his word that civil governments have great responsibilities, but rearing children is not of them. Kay James mentions the fact that some politicians and academicians recommend that we turn our children over for the government to rear. But the government often fails to take care of its legitimate obligations; we know it would miserably fail with our children. Besides, children need parents to feed, to clothe, to tuck them in at night, and to answer their questions. "If the past thirty years have taught us anything," Kay James says, "it is that two-parent families are the foundation of the village" (pp. 7-8).

But what about the church's influence in transforming America? Families have the major responsibility in changing the moral and spiritual values of Americans. The government certainly has an obligation to make these changes as easy as possible, although the government has a more limited sphere of operation than either the home or the church. But what can the church do in helping families and communities to have safe environments for the rearing of children? Tragically, many churches have made so many compromises with the surrounding culture that they have had precious little positive influence.

When bishops, preachers, rabbis, and priests fail to preach the truth of God's word, the nation is in for some rough sledding. Bishop John Shelby Spong has attempted to convince our generation that there are no absolute moral values. He tells his audiences that fornication is not always wrong; homosexuality is just another lifestyle; and we cannot be certain about truth. Have not Bishop Spong and similar liberal theologians joined forces with secular humanism to destroy the very foundation of moral and spiritual values? The sad truth is that liberal theologians do far more damage to the cause of Christ than humanists, atheists, agnostics and other unbelievers. We expect unbelievers to attack the Bible and New Testament Christianity; that is their reason for being. But when men who claim to love God, his word, and his Son ridicule the Bible and those who believe it, they do untold damage to the moral values of our nation's people, especially our young people. As a consequence of the unbelief being

promoted by preachers and by other theologians, young people lose their faith in God - if they ever had any - and turn to drugs, violence, sexual promiscuity, and other forms of evil.

Even those churches and theologians which claim to be evangelical or fundamentalist have often failed to take the Bible and New Testament Christianity seriously. Kay James cites a national survey conducted by Barna Associates of California. The survey showed that the majority of Americans reject the notion of absolute truth, do not believe in the God described in the Bible, do not believe that Satan is a real entity, believe all faiths teach basically the same thing, and do not believe it matters what god they pray to because every deity is ultimately the same deity, shrouded in different names and attributes of mankind (p. 77). Many evangelicals occupy the same position on moral and spiritual ideas as the people of the world.

Are you aware that many of this nation's founding fathers believed in the God of the Bible and argued that no nation could be strong without that faith. George Washington commented: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports ... The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them ... Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education ... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of a religious people." What if modern politicians had the courage to speak as did Washington? If they did, they would be accused of belonging to the "religious right."

Thomas Jefferson, who was almost unquestionably a deist, said, "And can liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm foundation, the conviction in the minds of people that these liberties are a gift of god? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever" (James, p. 76). If Thomas Jefferson were alive today, what would be his reaction to some of the recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court? Would he tremble when our government guarantees freedom of speech and press to everyone in our public schools except the students who want to talk about religion; How would Jefferson react when he learned that communism, Hinduism, atheism, evolutionism, the New Age movement, and other radical worldviews can be promoted in the public schools but not Christianity? Would his so-called "wall of separation" allow for such discrimination against Christianity?

If churches are going to be a part of the solution to our moral and spiritual problems, they must build according to God's standards - not by the world's agenda. Have you ever wondered if the world is influencing the

church more than the church is influencing the world? Do you remember these words from the Roman letter: "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2)? God designed his church to have an impact for good in our world. "You are the salt of the earth ...You are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:13-16). How can the churches change the world when they fall in with the fleeting fashions of the world?

My friends, the world needs transforming, as Kay Coles James insists. But political solutions are not going to solve spiritual problems. If we recognize the moral and spiritual conditions in our nation - and we will if we keep our eyes open - we know what the solutions are and where they can be found. The Bible furnishes us the answers to all the moral and spiritual problems which Americans face. We can stop crime in our streets, the growing problem of teenage pregnancy, the lying and stealing by our public servants - if we teach our young people right from wrong. The teaching has to begin in the home, but it has to be reinforced by the church and by other moral people in our nation. In addition, we must vote out of office those men and women whose moral values are on a par with barnyard animals. We must also trust God for the harvest when we have lived and taught his will.

God is still in heaven and rules in the affairs of men.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Winford Claiborne

"Pluralism" is a word that is often used to describe the enormous variety in our nation. The political scene is characterized by Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Reform Party members, Green Party members, Communists, socialists, and nonaffiliated people. Financially, there are conservatives, liberals, and radicals. Many other differences can be a blessing to America if we are willing to allow people the path they prefer, so long as their freedom does not impinge on the rights of others. In the United States we have the freedom to practice almost anything we prefer in worship. We cannot practice human sacrifice. We are not supposed to make so much noise in our worship that we interfere with others' tranquility, although my wife and I lived in a Florida community where the church members yelled and screamed until midnight each Sunday. They were so loud they kept our baby awake until way past his usual bedtime. Churches must not engage in illegal activities, such as, gambling. Churches enjoy greater freedom in our nation than anywhere else on earth. But we must be constantly alert because there are forces in our nation that would rob us of our right to worship God, as we believe we ought. I am not being pessimistic, but any student of history knows what can happen.

Tragically, some churches of Christ are being deceived into adopting modern beliefs regarding religious pluralism. They are falling in with the fleeting fashions of this world (Rom. 12:2). They are joining in with sectarian groups in evangelistic campaigns and in worship services, such as sunrise services on Easter. They may resent my saying this, but what they are doing - wittingly or unwittingly - is conceding that absolute truth does not exist, at least, does not exist in some areas. Or they may be saying that truth does not matter or that we cannot know it. In either case, that is a tragic compromise of God's truth as revealed in the Bible. Such concessions can lead to agnosticism, if that has not already happened.

I want to furnish information today that shows conclusively the compromises some churches of Christ have made with denominationalism. Before I give you that information, however, I must make some explanations. I am not for one moment questioning the honesty or the sincerity of anyone involved in these compromises - not the preachers or elders or members among churches of Christ - not the leaders or members of the other religious groups which participate in these activities. My responsibility is not to judge motives, but to examine the practices of those

who engage in these pluralistic campaigns. We must leave the judging of motives to God almighty, but we have an obligation to prove all things and to hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). Examining religious views and practices is not an option for those who care about the church; it is a sacred duty.

An elder of one church of Christ that encourages denominationalism and cooperates with denominations in evangelistic campaigns and in sectarian worship services provided the rationale for their participation. The elder who furnished the information said the church had four options: It could combat the effort, as congregations among churches of Christ have done by taking out newspaper ads opposing such sectarian efforts; it could attempt to be neutral or at least inactive; it could be a silent encourager; or it could openly support such efforts. The elder says he had always opposed such denominational cooperation - although he had not opposed them very loudly - but now he believes such opposition is not appropriate for him. I respect his decision, but grieve over his determination to promote error - error that he freely admits is preached by the speaker in the campaign. That really troubles me and should trouble every faithful member of churches of Christ, including the church, which this elder represents.

Let us now examine the four options that this elder says were open to him. He could combat the denominational effort to evangelize his community. Is that what faithful churches of Christ ought to do? We are not to be ugly and belligerent in our opposition to error, but we have no choice about opposing it. Let us say, for example, that a speaker promotes what is commonly called "the sinner's prayer" as a means of enjoying salvation from our sins and entrance into the kingdom of God almighty. That position is so obviously false that it hardly needs any refutation. But just in case you may not have thought about it from a biblical viewpoint, let me be as emphatic and as kind as possible. There is not a preacher on earth who can find the sinner's prayer in the New Testament. Every case of conversion in the book of Acts demands faith in God and obedience to the Lord in baptism. If the so-called "sinner's prayer" were acceptable, why did not one preacher in the New Testament recommend it? Can those who want to follow the word of God cooperate with those who teach such obvious error? Paul condemned in no uncertain terms those who preach another gospel (Gal. 1:8-9).

The second option to an interdenominational evangelistic crusade is neutrality or at least inactivity. How can a faithful church be neutral when error is being promoted in the community? Truth and truth alone makes men free (John 8:32). How can we sit on the fence and do nothing when a preacher is denying the very fundamentals of the faith? Do you remember these words from the very lips of the Son of God: "He who is not with me is

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against me; and he who gathers not with me scatters abroad" (Mt. 12:30)? Denying the specific teaching of Jesus Christ does not sound as if the speaker in the crusade is with the Lord. Jesus said very emphatically: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). The speaker in the crusade has actually poked fun at members of the churches of Christ for preaching the essentiality of baptism. I would not deny him the freedom to preach whatever he chooses, but I have difficulty understanding how any member of the church can cooperate with those who attack the church of the living God.

The elder mentions a third option: Being a silent encourager. How can an elder of the Lord's church be an encourager - silent or otherwise - of error? But that is exactly what churches that cooperate in interdenominational crusades are doing. The elder asks, "Does the (crusade speaker) preach everything I would preach, in the way I would preach it?" He answers, "No." Then he adds: "Like many of my brothers and sisters, I wish he would give more attention to the place of baptism in the believer's life." Is that all preaching the Bible is - a wish? My friends, it makes no difference what you wish or what I wish; it is only what the Lord wishes that really matters. And if you want to know what the Lord wishes us to preach about baptism, read the book of Acts. Peter was not speaking of a wish when he commanded the Jews who had crucified the Son of God: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). He was delivering the only way men and women could become members of the church of Jesus Christ. How can any Christian be a silent encourager of such soul-condemning error?

The fourth option is to be a supporter - an active, enthusiastic supporter - of the effort. Some questions on this option are in order. Do you honestly believe Jesus Christ would have supported such an effort? O, I am aware there were no denominations in his day, but would he have endorsed or even permitted his followers to cooperate with those who openly and enthusiastically opposed the plan of salvation he purchased with his own blood? Jesus could not be accused of being pluralistic in his approach to the will of God. Has he clearly enough revealed what we ought to believe and to do so that we can be sure of following his will? You know he has, or we cannot be held accountable for obeying him.

An elder of the church now believes he can endorse a man who teaches doctrines and commandments of men. Not only does the elder writing the treatise about cooperating in ecumenical meetings endorse false doctrine; so do his fellow elders - all of them. The elder writing the letter said that when the elders where he worships discussed working in an area-wide campaign,

the discussion was very brief, and not one of the twenty-four elders voiced opposition or concern. Of all the statements in the document I find disheartening and disturbing, this one tops them all. Not one elder voiced opposition or concern - not one. Was there not one elder who had any concern about the following verse from the book of Hebrews: "Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they who must give an account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13-17)? Did the twenty-four elders have no concern they might be leading their members to wolves? Such blatant disregard for the teaching of scripture defies logic.

Those twenty-four elders chose to support the crusade because of their admiration for the more than half century of the speaker's effective ministry. That the speaker has become one of the world's most respected and honored preachers cannot be disputed. He has spoken in many major cities across our nation and throughout the world, but what does that have to do with "effective ministry"? Effective ministry demands that a man preach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The crusade speaker these elders are endorsing has spoken some truth, but he not only has failed to preach the whole truth, he has preached and still does preach some positive error. The letter-writing elder even acknowledges that fact when he discusses baptism. But baptism is not the only topic on which the crusade speaker has taught error. He preaches grace alone through faith alone. That teaching exactly contradicts what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. "Not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). No one - I repeat-NO ONE - has a right to cooperate with or to endorse a man who does not preach the whole counsel of God. How can twenty-four - or even one elder -endorse a Calvinistic preacher? The fact that some elders have made these doctrinal compromises has disturbed hundreds of thousands of members of the church of our Lord. The compromises cannot be excused on any basis.

I want to return briefly to the expression, "effective ministry." How do we define "effective ministry?" Is it determined on the basis of crowds that attend the speaker's crusades? On that basis neither Noah nor Elijah nor Isaiah was engaged in effective ministry. I have serious doubt that Jesus Christ would qualify. There were times when Jesus enjoyed great popularity, but there were other times when the crowds wanted to kill him and eventually did. If all crusade speakers would address the topics which so desperately demand attention, many of them would not be so popular. They might even be run out of town. And how would John the Baptist rate as an effective spokesman for God?

The elder writing the letter I am reviewing says, The crusade speaker "has been, for a long time, the most effective voice for goodness and decency in our nation; indeed, he has been its moral barometer and conscience." As a matter of fact, he has often spoken out strongly against certain evils in our society. I have heard him deliver some effective lessons on the home for which I have publicly expressed appreciation. But his neglect to oppose some inexcusably tragic situations has hurt his influence among many people. For example, when he was asked about the president's moral misbehavior with the White House intern, the crusade speaker said, "Mr. Clinton is such a handsome man that the girls are really fond of him." My friends, that is what is called dereliction of duty. He should have had the courage of Nathan who confronted king David's sin by saying, "You are the man." There is no excuse for not doing it. He is one of the few men who might have made a difference had he confronted the president with his inexcusable conduct. He may have been the only one who could have made a difference, but how can he live with himself for not trying? What would Elijah or Micaiah have said? Would they have said, "Well, you know how handsome the president is and how the girls fall all over him"? You know what they would have said. It would have been plain enough that the president and his lawyers could not have passed it off. Definitions would have been superfluous.

Is the speaker for the campaign "the most effective voice for goodness and decency in our nation"? That he is an effective voice can hardly be denied. But has he been an effective voice for returning the nation to primitive Christianity? Nobody is so effective as he ought to be who leaves so much unsaid. Hundreds of topics demand examination and discussion, but the crusade speaker has either ignorantly or purposely avoided these. For example, he was asked on one occasion why he did not speak on New Testament baptism; he replied, "It is too controversial." Is that a valid reason for failing to tell people what God wants them to do to be saved? If it is, then virtually every topic in the scriptures - from the creation of the world to the Lord's second coming can be ignored. When Jesus told the Jews, "Except you believe that I am he," (John 8:24), that was about as controversial as words can be. Did Jesus back away from his exclusivist teaching? He did not because he could not and be true to his Father's will.

How in the world did an elder of a church - any church - arrive at the conclusion that any man - preacher, elder, president - has been the nation's moral barometer and conscience? My moral barometer and conscience is the inspired word of almighty God. How can we elevate a man - any man - to that august position? I am not questioning the crusader's moral goodness, but I am saying that we should get our moral compass from the Bible - not from a preacher, regardless of his devotion to his beliefs. Paul informed a young preacher: "All scripture is inspired of God, and is

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (or full grown), completely furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is good and right for a preacher to set an example for others, but preachers are not our moral barometers and consciences. Only the Holy Spirit through his word can provide the right direction. The inspired Psalmist wrote: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). The word of God must provide our moral guidelines.

The letter-writing elder asked concerning the crusade speaker he and his fellow elders have openly and enthusiastically endorsed, "Does he preach everything I would preach, in the way I would preach it? No. Like many of my brothers and sisters, I wish he would give more attention to the proper place of baptism in the life of believers." Does it really matter if the speaker in an interdenominational campaign does not preach like we do or, at least, ought to preach? When a speaker promotes Calvinism, premillennialism, and mechanical instruments in worship to God, cooperation with liberal theologians and religious pluralism, can we work together in promoting such grievous error? Apparently twenty-four elders and their preacher think so, but it cannot be done without doing great damage to the cause of Jesus Christ. Such compromise can help no one and can confuse millions. Is that the goal of the twenty-four elders? I must admit that I cannot understand their reasoning and their purposes.

The twenty-four elders appear to want more said about New Testament baptism. There is one thing for sure: It will not be taught in its power and beauty in an interdenominational campaign. But are there not more important topics in an area-wide meeting? What could be more important in any meeting than telling men and women what God wants them to do to receive the remission of sins? How arrogant that we should decide we can support a meeting when we know that truth will be neglected and error taught! Have elders no shame when they lead their flock into contaminated pastures? Are they remembering that they must give an account of the flock? I am deeply troubled at this turn of events. It can do only harm.

I plead with all elders of the church, all preachers of the gospel, and all members of the body of Christ to think seriously about these matters and to use their time and talent to stem the tide of religious pluralism in the church of our Lord. Will not God hold us accountable if we fail in the endeavor? You know he will.

MORAL ISSUES - CHURCH

Roger A. Rush

Reading: Jere. 5:20-31

Intro. Jeremiah was one of the most courageous prophets of the Old Testament. And, he served God during one of the most tumultuous times in the history of God's people (625-580 BC). He witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah.

Years before the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah pleaded with his people to return to God. His plea fell on deaf ears. Biblical ignorance plagued God's people. God's name was no longer held in reverence. Sin filled the land. The rich grew richer and the poor grew poorer. There was no one to plead the cause of the less fortunate. Truth and justice were perverted, and the people applauded!

What does that say to the church? What lessons should we learn? And, what measures must we take to insure that the same does not happen to us?

I. JEREMIAH'S TROUBLED LIFE

A. In his personal life, he was forbidden by God to take a wife and thus never knew the love and support of a family (16:1, 2).

1. This was no doubt in part due to the troubles he was to encounter in his work.
2. Even Paul encouraged those who could to remain single during an especially troubling time in the history of the early church (1 Cor. 7:8, 26-33).

B. Many attempts were made by the authorities to discourage him in his ministry:

1. Pashur, chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and smote the prophet and put him in stocks (19:15; 20:1, 2).
2. The priests and prophets plotted against him to take his life because he predicted the destruction of Jerusalem (26:9-11).

3. Jehoiakim read and burned his book (36:21-24).
4. He was accused of treason (siding with the Chaldeans) and cast into prison (20:7-9).

NOTE: This list is by no means exhaustive.

- C. Jeremiah often grew discouraged as indicated in his resolve not to preach any more (20:7-9).

II. TO WHAT DID JEREMIAH ATTRIBUTE JUDAH'S DESTRUCTION?

A. Ignorant spiritual leaders (2:8)

1. The exact indictment was: "They that handle the law knew me not."

2. It is possible to know the Bible but not know the God of the Bible.

- a. The study of the Scriptures is not designed to know the Bible as an end in and of itself!

- b. We seek to know the Bible in order that we might know God (2 Thess.1:7-10; John 14:9).

B. False teaching filled the land (5:30, 31)

1. Here the indictment was: "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power" (NKJV).

2. What made matters worse was the fact that the nation delighted in the deception: "my people love it so" (NKJV).

- a. No man can be faithful to God when his message is designed to appeal to men (Gal. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

- b. No person, nation, or church can be faithful to God if truth is not demanded of those who lead (Jn. 8:32).

C. God's word was ignored (23:16, 17).

1. Here they are accused of selfish disregard for the will of God and a stubborn refusal to follow His direction.

2. They filled the people with false hope because their message came from “their own imaginations” and not from God (NASB).

D. They practiced ancient “spin control” (23:31).

1. They proclaimed their own message, but they gave the credit to God - “who use their own tongues and say, ‘He says’ ” (NKJV).

2. How often does the same thing happen today? How much of what God calls sin has now been sanitized by the world and the church?

a. Idolatry - multiculturalism, pluralism

b. Perversion (homosexuality) - alternate lifestyle

c. Abortion - choice

d. Covetousness - ambition

e. Pornography - freedom of expression

f. Adultery and fornication - free love

III. IT IS NOT SURPRISING WHEN THE WORLD REJECTS GOD’S MORAL STANDARD BUT IT IS A REAL TRAGEDY WHEN THE CHURCH FOLLOWS SUIT!

A. Rom. 12:1, 2

B. 2 Cor. 6:17

C. Titus 2:11, 12

D. Matt. 5:13-16

IV. THE CHURCH IS CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING THE “PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH” (1 Tim. 3:15)

A. Doctrinal truth:

1. Inspiration of the Bible

2. Deity of Christ
3. Nature of the church
4. Steps to salvation
5. Acceptable worship

B. Moral truth:

1. Right and wrong
2. Good and evil
3. Acceptable and unacceptable conduct

V. THE CHURCH IS UNDER PRESSURE TO CHANGE:

A. First are calls for doctrinal changes:

1. Regarding salvation issues (baptism in particular)!
2. Regarding women's issues (more prominent role for women)!
3. Regarding worship (performance oriented)!

B. Compromise in doctrinal areas will inevitably lead to compromises in the moral arena as well!

1. This can be easily illustrated:
 - a. Reformed Judaism - sanctions same sex unions
 - b. Catholicism's use of bingo and other gambling enterprises to raise funds
 - c. Various liberal denominations supporting choice (abortion)
 - d. Religion as a force for social change rather than spiritual transformation

NOTE: It is not the responsibility of the church to transform society, but to change lives (Eph. 4:11-16). This process,

when followed faithfully, will naturally lead to a changed society!

C. The church has not escaped unscathed:

1. Dancing
2. Gambling
3. Abortion
4. Sexual promiscuity
5. Divorce
6. Gossip
7. Greed

VI. WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF HIS CHURCH?

- A. We ought to be leading the fight for right! - Matt. 5:13-16
- B. Our stand needs to be visible and vocal! - Philip. 1:17
- C. Compromise is unthinkable! - 2 Tim. 4:2
- D. As preachers we must boldly speak the truth on moral matters!

NOTE: How many of you have addressed the sins of our president and called for faithful men of God to demand better of our leaders! Stop hiding behind the veil of politics and speak out for God (remember Micaiah and John the Baptist). It has nothing to do with politics. I was just as outraged by the language and dirty tricks of Richard Nixon, but, at least, when his sins came to light, people were troubled by them and spoke out against them. Today, the response to our present president is a shrug of the shoulders and a "who cares as long as it does not affect me personally?" What has happened to our courage and commitment to truth and right?

- D. Our children must be given a biblical foundation upon which to build!
- 2 Tim.2:19

GRACE AND MERCY

Steve Snider

"Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."

"Mercy there was great and grace was free,
pardon there was multiplied to me,
there my burdened soul found liberty,
at Calvary."

Certainly, one of the grandest themes of the Bible is the grace and mercy of our great God and His Son Jesus Christ. Men's hearts have been stirred for centuries as they read about the wonderful grace and mercy of God, or as they sang hymns that extol the wonders of God's grace, or as they experienced God's grace through the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. The subject of grace is both a marvelous and a profound subject.

When the subject is mentioned it brings to our minds great appreciation and, sometimes, great concern. Great appreciation because we are mindful of God's grace and the vital role that it plays in the salvation of men's souls. We have concern because of the many errors that are taught in regard to God's grace and mercy. Unfortunately, a great deal that is said about God's grace is not true, and tragically many will lose their souls because they have believed error on the subject of salvation by God's grace. Even within the body of Christ we continue to hear strange things and false accusations concerning grace. For example, you will read or hear said, "the church until recent times knew little or nothing about grace and certainly never taught or preached about grace." You might read or hear someone say, "man is saved by grace and there is not one thing that he can do to obtain salvation." Someone else can be heard to say, "the O.T. was strictly a system of law and the N.T. is a system of grace. Law and grace cannot exist together." The list could go on and on of things that have been and are being said about grace that are not true and may cost many their souls. In this lesson we hope to examine God's grace and mercy and learn some important truths from God's word that will help us better understand and appreciate God's grace and mercy.

Grace is not a difficult term to define. It simply means unmerited favor or undeserved favor. Mercy carries with it the idea of benevolence, a feeling of kindness or compassion toward the needy and helpless. Roy Deaver in an article on grace stated that grace involves the following things: (1) the giver,

(2) the motive behind the giving, (3) the giving itself, (4) the gift, (5) the recipient of the gift, (6) the observers of the grace situation. (*Living Messages of the Old Testament*, pg. 419) Another writer, in an article dealing with grace and the O.T. stated, "All men need to know at least three things about the grace of God: (1) since the days of creation God has and continues to bestow His loving-kindness and favor or grace on mankind, (2) throughout the O.T. God's grace is seen as God prepares the world for the coming Messiah which was the only hope for mankind, (3) the ultimate manifestation of God's grace is seen in the death of Jesus, the Son of God, on the cross. (1987 FHU Lectureship Book, pg.9) While there are, no doubt, other things we should know about grace, these three statements do serve as a good summary of what we hope to accomplish in the lesson.

Since this lectureship is based on thoughts found in the O.T. book of Jeremiah I hope to be able to demonstrate two fundamental truths. I hope to show that God's grace was indeed present in Old Testament times and that God's grace, (especially as it relates to deliverance) was conditional, and that man must make a response to God's grace in order to receive its benefits.

As we look to the Old Testament is it not the case that on the very opening pages of the Bible God's grace and mercy are immediately seen? On the opening pages of the Bible we see the creative activity of God as He brought into existence this world in which we live. In this we certainly see the grace of God. We see God's grace in the power of His creation. We see God's grace in the creation of a beautiful planet upon which we are privileged to live. We see God's grace and mercy as He creates man and then woman as a companion for man because He saw that it was not good for man to dwell alone. God's grace and mercy are shown as He places man and woman in the garden where they had everything they needed to live forever and have perfect fellowship with God.

But the next picture we have of man is not a pretty one. Despite all that God has done for man, Adam and Eve sin against God. They transgress the command of God by eating of the fruit of the tree that God had forbidden them to eat. Now what does God immediately do? He intervenes and sets in motion the great scheme of redemption (Gen.3:15) This was not because man deserved it or had done anything that would motivate someone to want to be benevolent toward him; it was simply an act of grace and mercy on the part of God.

As you continue to move through the O.T., you continue to see the demonstration of God's grace. In Gen.6:8 the Bible tells us that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." This is actually the first time the word grace appears in the Bible, and, since that is the case, we want to take a

careful look at this incident. I believe it serves as a perfect example of what is involved in God's grace and therefore warrants our careful attention. In this passage God announces that He is going to bring judgment upon the world because of the wickedness that was present in the world at that time. But as Gen.6:8 tells us Noah found grace or favor in the eyes of the Lord. Because of this God gives Noah specific instructions concerning how he and his family can avoid the destruction that is going to come upon mankind. Noah, by faith (Heb. 11:7), did as God instructed him, and he and his family were spared from the flood. Now, some might want to argue that Noah earned his salvation by building the ark. But in order for Noah's salvation to be earned, or based on works of merit, he would have to have been able to do the following things; (1) he would have to have been able to foresee the flood, (2) know the way of deliverance from the flood, (3) know how to build an ark that would withstand the flood. Noah knew none of these things! Noah and his family were saved from destruction because he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord revealed to him what he must do in order to be saved. There was no way that Noah could have been saved apart from God's grace. There is no way that Noah could have saved himself.

One more important example should be sufficient. In Ex.6 we read that God hears the groaning of His people in Egypt. Please read Ex.6:6-8 because you will find there a beautiful expression of God's grace and mercy. In these verses God tells the people that He will (1) bring them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, (2) rescue them from their bondage, (3) redeem them with an outstretched hand. Now the question that we need to ask is this: "What did these people do to deserve or merit this wonderful promise from God. The answer is nothing! It was an act of mercy and grace on God's part. God was bestowing unmerited and undeserved favor upon His people. He saw their condition, was moved by their groaning, and determined to intercede on their behalf.

You could go through the rest of the O.T. and find example after example of God bestowing grace and mercy upon His people. In Jer.31:1-3 God is promising His people that those who are spared the sword will find grace. There is some disagreement among Bible scholars as to what event God is speaking about here, but most believe that it is a reference to those who would be freed from Babylonian captivity. Most also believe that its ultimate fulfillment was with the coming of Christ, the promised Messiah. The important point for us to observe, however, is that it was by God's grace that they were spared. It was a result of God's loving-kindness. How foolish it is then to contend that grace is purely a New Testament concept.

It must also be observed in this discussion of God's grace that many times God's grace is conditional. It is true that the world in general enjoys many blessings from the omnipotent hand of God, but when it comes to salvation,

forgiveness, and deliverance from bondage, God's grace has always been conditional. Let me explain what I mean. All of humanity enjoys God's creation. God continues to give the sun and the rain, and, as Jesus said, this falls on the evil and the good and the just and the unjust. But this is not true when it comes to forgiveness and salvation.

Consider the two Old Testament examples of Noah and the children of Israel in Egyptian bondage. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and no one who believes the Bible will deny that. But what did that mean to Noah? It meant that God would reveal to him what he must do in order to be spared from the flood. What would have happened, though, had Noah not followed God's instructions in building the ark? What if Noah had said, "Lord I trust in you, and I believe you will save me from the coming judgment, but I don't see the need to build this ark." That would look like he didn't trust God and was trying to save himself. (I had a denominational preacher make this same type argument concerning baptism. He said he trusted in the cross of Christ, and, if baptism was essential to being saved, then you would be earning your salvation.) Now, I think most folks would agree that if Noah had reasoned that way that both he and his family would have perished in the flood.

What about the children of Israel in Egypt? What if they had refused to listen to Moses? What if they had refused to leave Egypt after the final plague? What if they had refused to follow God's instructions concerning the Passover in Ex. 12? What if they had refused to cross the Red Sea when God through Moses parted the waters? Again, I believe almost everyone would answer these questions the same way. They would have either died in bondage or died at the hands of the Egyptians after leaving Egypt.

But yet we come to the New Testament and virtually everyone in the religious world wants to deny that there is anything we must do in order to be saved. But listen carefully to what they say! They will take the position that there is nothing you can do to be saved, but then they will urge you to believe, which is doing something; they will urge you to confess, which is doing something; they will urge you to repent, which is doing something; they will urge you to accept Christ as your Savior, which again is doing something! For some strange reason you can do all these things and yet not be doing anything but the moment you're baptized then you have done something in an attempt to earn your salvation. The reasonings of man really are confusing at times!

A passage in the New Testament that often enters into this discussion is John 1:17. Here it is said, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." It will be argued from this verse that the Bible teaches that the Old Testament was strictly a law system and the

New Testament is strictly a system of grace. But consider these questions. Was there no truth under the law of Moses? Is it really the case that there is no law under Christ? (Consider Rom.8:2; 1 Cor.9:21; James 1:25) Obviously, John is not teaching that there was no truth or grace under the law of Moses, and now there is no law under Christ. John was simply showing that the grace and truth that comes through Jesus Christ is far superior to that which came through Moses. The purpose of the Old Law was to prepare the way for Christ, the final revelation from God to man.

Another argument that some will make in an effort to deny the conditional nature of God's grace is to contend that if grace is conditional we could never be sure of our salvation. This kind of reasoning is very dangerous, however. The implication is that, regardless of what the Bible teaches is the relationship between grace and obedience, it can all be discarded with a wave of the wand of emotionalism and subjectivism.

There is assurance in conditional grace. (Read 1 John 1:7) And the truth is we have assurance in several areas of life where conditions are included. For example, if we go to work everyday and do our job we will be paid. If we give the correct answer on an exam, we will pass. If we are careful when crossing the street, then we will not be hit by a car. We function in all these areas with confidence and assurance that are conditional in nature, and there is even more reason for confidence in the conditional grace of God. In God's conditional grace there is the promise that if we are faithful to Him we will be rewarded with a home in heaven.

God's saving grace is conditional. The conditions of grace involve faith (Heb. 11:6) and obedience (Heb.5:9) working together. Let us study carefully the word of God, learn of His marvelous grace which culminated in the sending of His Son into this world,(John3:16) and then let us learn what it is that God requires that this grace might be ours.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

Nicholas Deiger

As one reads and studies the Book of the prophet Jeremiah he soon finds that God is speaking through Jeremiah. The phrase "WORD OF THE LORD" appears in fifty-five different passages of this book. Also this phrase appears some one hundred times in some form or other. The book begins with this statement -- **JEREMIAH 1:1,2:** *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.* It introduces us to the Prophet Jeremiah, as to how his message came and when it was spoken. In **JEREMIAH 1:5** we read of God's choosing him for this great work, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."* The great work that God gave unto Jeremiah is found in **JEREMIAH 1:9,10:** *Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.* This work would have been impossible if it were not for the fact (1) It was of God, and (2) God spoke through Jeremiah.

When we consider the phrase "WORD OF THE LORD" just what are we meaning? **WORD** -- (1) speech, a word, speaking, a thing, (2) a saying, an utterance. Words are that which conveys the thinking of one person to another. **LORD** -- Jehovah (Yahweh) "the existing One"; the proper name of the one true God; unpronounced except with the vowel pointings. It is a name which was and is held in high reverence by the people of God. Jeremiah continually reminded his hearers that he spoke only by the authority and the inspiration of God. It reminds us of what Paul said in, **2 TIMOTHY 3:16,17:** *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* If man is going to follow the ways of God then he must listen to what God's spokesmen wrote.

Our task is to present this great theme from Chapters 36 and 23. Let us first notice some things from chapter 36. God commands Jeremiah to take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that He speaks to Jeremiah against Israel, Judah, and against all the nations. God's message to be written was (1) That they may hear all the adversities that

God will bring against them, (2) That everyone may turn from their evil ways, and (3) That God may forgive their iniquity and their sin. What was the purpose of this writing? Jeremiah called Baruch, who was his amanuensis, (secretary) to write what he dictates to him from the Lord. He then instructed Baruch to take the scroll to the house of the Lord and read it. The term "I am confined" means, "to be shut up." Jeremiah was not in prison but may have not had the same freedom as Baruch had under King Jehoiakim. He was to do this on a "fasting" day. The fast was likely to be an occasion on which Jeremiah would find the Jews more softened, as well as a larger number of them met together (from *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*). This was done in hopes that the people of Judah would bring their supplication before the Lord and turn from their evil ways. (Jeremiah 36: 7). Because the Lord's anger and wrath were great against the people, Baruch did as he was commanded.

In the 5th year of the reign of Jehoiakim in the 9th month all the people in Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah proclaimed a fast before the Lord. It was at this time that Baruch came and stood before the people and read all the words that God had given Jeremiah through inspiration. After the reading the leaders requested Baruch to bring the scroll and read it before them. They asked Baruch this question, **JEREMIAH 36: 17:** *"Tell us now, how did you write all these words - at his instruction?"* By which he answered them *"So Baruch answered them, 'He proclaimed with his mouth all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink in the book,'"* (**JEREMIAH 36:18**). They then told Baruch and Jeremiah to go and hide themselves so no one could find them. The leaders hid the scroll in the chamber of Elishama and went and told the King all the word that they had heard. King Jehoiakim sent Jehudi to go and get the scroll and bring it to him. Jehudi was told to read from the scroll. As he had read three or four columns, the King took the scribe's knife and cut the pages from the scroll and cast them into the fire until all was consumed. This showed the utter disdain that King Jehoiakim had for God and God's Holy Word. Neither the King nor any of his servants were afraid of what was said. The King even wanted to have Jeremiah and Baruch seized, but God protected them.

God once again commanded Jeremiah to write all the words that he had given him before on another scroll. - **JEREMIAH 36:28:** *"Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned."* Jeremiah was then commanded to tell King Jehoiakim that none of his seed would sit on the throne of David. This punishment was going to be upon his family for their iniquity. Jeremiah did as God commanded him to do.

When one thinks of King Jehoiakim's trying to destroy the Word of the Lord, we are reminded of what is said in, **JEREMIAH 23:29**: *"Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"* God's Word like a "fire" purifies, pricks the conscience, illuminates the mind, produces faith in the heart of the sincere person. It is like a hammer beating upon the blacksmith's anvil. The hammers wear out, but the anvil still remains. Man keeps trying to destroy the Word of God, but it is always there. Is it any wonder that Paul stated it this way, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek?* (ROMANS 1:16:) Or in **HEBREWS 4:12**: *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Man's heart many time is like a "rock." The tenderness of the Gospel cannot melt it; perhaps it takes the "Hammer of Truth" as one preaches. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come ... (Acts 24: 25)

Oh, how many times does one hear the word of God and refuse to let it prick his heart to bring him to repentance? They may not, like King Jehoiakim take a knife and cut it out of the Bible, but they do so in their lives. A good example of this is found in **ACTS 7** as Stephen addressed the High Priest and those of his accusers. Notice what he said in verses 51-53, *"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."* Stephen said they rejected the word of God, by rejecting the Prophets just as their fathers had done. What were the results of this? The same as their fathers. They picked up stones and stoned Stephen to death. Yes, the word of God is "Quick and Powerful," but it will only have the effect on one's Life if he will accept it. People today scoff at the word of God; they change it to suit their own needs; and they reject it and say it is outdated. But just as in the days of Jeremiah the word of God carried a message for the people to repent and change or suffer the wrath of God, so it is today.

Did what Jeremiah wrote about the people of his day come to pass? King Jehoiakim was told that none of his sons would sit and rule on the throne of David. Look in **JEREMIAH 22:30**: *Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.'* Just who is spoken of here? - **JEREMIAH**

22:28: *“Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol - a vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, and cast into a land which they do not know?”*

Defiance for the word of God was the downfall of the people of God all down through history. In **HOSEA 4:6:** God proclaimed these words, - *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.* Jesus made this statement in **JOHN 12:48:** *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him - the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”* Yes my friends the Word of the Lord is just what it says it is, “the Word of the Lord.” It is not ours to tamper with, to change, to add to, or take away from.

God said it and that settles the matter once and for all times. Listen to what Jude said in verse 3: *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.* God's word was given to Jeremiah, he dictated it to Baruch, it was written down in a book for all to hear. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation contains the word of the Lord. Man must heed what it says to him. Paul warned Timothy in **1 TIMOTHY 4:16**: *Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both you and those who hear you.* And again in **2 TIMOTHY 2:15**: *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* One cannot know God unless he reads, studys and obeys the Word of the Lord. **ROMANS 10:17**: *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* **ECCLESIASTES 12:13,14**: *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.*

Let all make sure what we write, read, and teach is as Jeremiah said in, **JEREMIAH 36:2**: *"Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day."*

Helps used:

JEREMIAH, A COMMENTARY - Exegetical, Homiletical By. William S. Cline
Volumes I, II

CLARK'S COMMENTARY Isaiah- Malachi Volume IV By Adam Clark

JAMIESON, FAUSSET and BROWN COMMENTARY - PC STUDY BIBLE

BARNE'S NOTES - PC STUDY BIBLE

KEIL and DELITZSCH COMMENTARY - PC STUDY BIBLE

THE NEW COVENANT

Keith Ball

TEXT: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13

It is an understandable and acceptable practice that when material possessions become old they are replaced. The old suit, in spite of how good we looked in it in days gone by, must be discarded. Most of us are sentimental people. We become attached to material possessions. We are also creatures of habit who become comfortable with performing activities in a given way and thereby often resist change.

The word of God plainly declares that there have been two major covenants. Of these two covenants, one is in effect today. The former covenant is referred to as being "old" and "obsolete" (Hebrews 8:13). The present covenant is "better" than the former covenant (Hebrews 8:6). Actually, the covenants are better compared using the superlatives "good, better, and best" with the old covenant being considered "good" and the new covenant considered "best." Even then, "best" does not do justice nor describe the new covenant, for words like "superior" and "excellent" are more adequate adjectives.

Approximately 500 years before the birth of Christ, God informed Jeremiah the prophet that a new covenant would be established with Israel and Judah. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34 KJV). The Hebrew word *berith* means "league, compact" and is translated in most English bibles as "covenant." This Hebrew word also carries with it the meaning of "fetters" or "to bind." The promise of this New Covenant would have been a breath of fresh air to Jeremiah and should have been the same for his contemporaries. Here God gives Jeremiah a glimpse into the future, enabling him to see a portion of God's eternal purpose. This eternal purpose has been that all men be considered His children by faith in Christ and heirs according to the promise given to Abraham (Galatians 3:26-

29). In the New Testament, the Hebrews writer quotes the aforementioned text from Jeremiah. The Greek word *diatheke* is used and is likewise translated "covenant." There is significance in this Greek word in that it denotes a non-negotiable relationship. God initiated the relationship and defined the terms. It is man's duty to obey and keep the covenant.

What is wrong with the Old Covenant?

The Hebrews writer states unequivocally that the First Covenant was faulty (Hebrews 8:7). "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." This covenant was faulty in that it did not make provision for the removal and forgiveness of sins. This is not to say there was not forgiveness under the Old Law. Moses repeatedly interceded for the people, asking God to forgive them and God forgave. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word:" (Numbers 14:19, 20). David prayed a similar prayer; acknowledging that God had forgiven him (Psalm 32). However, because of the limitations of animal sacrifices the sins of the old covenant worshipper were not completely forgiven. The Hebrews writer sheds light on the true purpose of the Old Covenant sacrifice. "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:3, 4). It is probably better stated that under the Old Covenant the Godfearing worshipper did not enjoy complete or absolute forgiveness of sins. What they did enjoy was a relationship with God as a result of their obedience in doing what was commanded of God. However, God was not completely forgiving their sins "at that point." Paul describes what God did as, "... because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" (Romans 3:25b, NKJV). This then should help answer the query as to how the Old Covenant worshipper could enjoy a complete forgiveness of sins. The answer is through the blood of the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ was retroactive to all that faithfully endeavored to walk according to God's ways before Calvary. The Old Covenant sacrifices were anticipatory to something better, which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

A second reason the Old Covenant was faulty and a reason given to Jeremiah for the old to be replaced was that the people broke the covenant (Jeremiah 31:32). In spite of all that God had done for them, the children of Israel were covenant breakers. God had "taken them by the hand" and brought them out of Egypt. These words are reminiscent of the loving way in which a father leads his children through danger. God had been a "husband" to them. Again we have words which express love and protection. In spite of all this, these chosen

people were covenant breakers. In fact, on the very day the law was given at Mt. Sinai, the people were breaking the commandments. Isaiah describes the people saying, "they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5b). They were a people who had been eyewitness to countless evidences of God's love and protection. They had seen everything from easy victories over their enemies to the miraculous provision of food and clothing, yet they remained faithless, fearful, and unbelieving. Throughout recorded Bible history they were stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart - covenant breakers. Israel can best be described as spiritual fornicators, a truth that scriptures bring forth in Numbers 25, a truth that can be seen in Jeremiah 3:6-11 as well as in the book of Hosea. In fact, our text of Hebrews 8:9b brings this truth to light. "...because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." Israel had not been a faithful, trustworthy bride in the nuptial covenant with God. She had not remained at home and was guilty of breaking her vows and commitments. It was at Mt. Sinai that the people said to Moses, "... all that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord" (Exodus 19:8). However, it was not long before Israel had broken this vow and had gone whoring after other gods.

We must also realize that the Old Covenant was faulty in that it was limited in scope. It was a covenant that was designed for and given unto the house of Israel. Deuteronomy 5:1-3 bears record that the giving of the law was exclusively unto Israel. "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Vs. 3). This excluded all those who lived before the time of the people of Israel including great men of faith like Noah and Abraham. This further excluded the contemporaries of the Israelites such as the Moabites, Midianites, Amorites and Philistines. It excludes us today for two reasons. First, we are not Israelites by physical birthright and secondly, even if we were Israelites by birth, this covenant is no longer in force. It is obsolete, abolished, nailed to the cross, and completely taken out of the way (Colossians 2:4; Ephesians 2:14-17). It was God's plan not to renew nor to restore the first covenant but to completely replace it with a new and better covenant. Thus the Levitical system of worship is completely void and of no effect today. It is for these reasons that today's worshipper should not look to Old Testament covenant practices and principles in order to please God. The Old Covenant, designed by God, served an extremely important role as tutor and schoolmaster (Galatians 3:24, 25). Even though it was God's design, it was wisely designed with intrinsic inadequacies meant to accomplish God's plan of perfection in Christ Jesus. God's design of the Old Covenant allowed the worshiper to become educated to the need for atonement, substitution and the shedding of blood to bring about forgiveness.

What is right with the New Covenant?

If the Old Covenant was faulty, the New Covenant has to be faultless or perfect. God promised Jeremiah that He would put His law in the minds and hearts of His people. The first covenant, "ministration," was written in stone (2 Corinthians 3:7). Even though it was commanded to be read and rehearsed at every opportunity (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), it simply became little more than a mechanical list of do's and don'ts. However, the New Covenant targets the fountainhead of man's core, his heart, soul, and mind. In order for an individual to come into a relationship with God today, he must have allowed the word of God to penetrate his heart. Herein lie the fundamentals of belief. Without belief there is nothing else an individual can do to profit himself spiritually. Lydia is an excellent example of conversion in the New Testament. According to Acts 16:14, we find that the Lord opened Lydia's heart. Nothing miraculous took place here. This woman learned the soul saving, powerful word of God (Romans 1:16) and, as a result, was obedient unto the Lord.

The New Covenant provides a closer relationship with God. "... I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33b). Under the Old Law there were many great men of faith such as Abraham, Moses, and David. These and faithful men like them enjoyed a relationship with God. He was their God and they were His people. In Leviticus 26:12 God promised Israel, "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." This was conditional upon Israel's obedience, at which we know they failed miserably. However, what God promised Jeremiah and those under the New Covenant was an ever-closer communion and relationship. We may better understand this relationship by thinking of the Old Covenant as a formal, rigid relationship with God whereas the New Covenant consists of a spiritual relationship with God. (John 3:5). We cannot help but believe that our relationship with God will take on yet a heightened level and dimension when we surround the throne in heaven (Rev. 21:1-4).

What further is "right" about the New Covenant is that grace, mercy, and forgiveness of sins can be experienced in a way that they had never been known or enjoyed before. It is in Christ Jesus that the Christian can rejoice, for there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1) because of sins. Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, died for the sins of mankind, thus making atonement for sin by the perfect gift of himself. Jesus Christ was perfect, sinless (Hebrews 5:9) yet he became sin for us that we might stand before God the Father - pure, innocent and without blemish as adopted sons of God (1 John 3:1,2). The

Hebrews writer reveals that under the New Covenant, God will be merciful unto the unrighteous (Hebrews 8:12). The subjects of mercy and grace are often linked in our minds, yet the subtle differences help us to attain a better understanding of these concepts. Simply stated, mercy involves not receiving what we deserve; whereas, grace involves receiving what we don't deserve. Under the Old Covenant individuals received the gifts of grace and mercy; however, they were never able to enjoy them to the fullness to which we are able under the New Covenant. Just as they were not able to enjoy complete satisfaction for sins, we today are able to rejoice in the truth of, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

It may seem strange that under the New Covenant there exists the clause, "... they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest" (Hebrews 8:11). Teaching is a very important part of the New Covenant. In the great commission, the disciples were to "go teach" and then "teach them to observe all things" that had been instructed by Jesus (Matthew 28:19, 20). Had it not been for the faithful teaching of Lois and Eunice, the young Timothy would not have grown up to be a great soldier of the cross. However this is not the point that the inspired writer of Hebrews wishes to make in regard to the differences between the two covenants. Under the Old Law, the Hebrew child, at birth, came into a covenant relationship with God. As the child grew he had to be taught the law and covenant into which he had been born.

The meaning of the word that is translated "neighbor" in Hebrews 8:11 is better translated "fellow-citizen." This translation gives us a more thorough understanding of this verse in that we are speaking of individuals already within the household of faith, for those who have entered the covenant relationship with God have done so because they have conscientiously made the decision to do so. It is not by physical birth that we have entered the kingdom but by the spiritual birth that we have come into the family of God (John 3:5). Therefore, it is impossible to find someone in the church who does not know how he or she came to be there or how they came to be a recipient of God's grace.

When the law was given at Mt. Sinai, God made his presence known through smoke and the violent shaking of the mountain to all Israel. In an earlier situation God made himself known and sealed a covenant promise in a rainbow (Genesis 9:16). Today, under the new and better covenant, Christ has sealed the covenant by his death and has given us his body and blood as the sign of that sealed covenant (Matthew 26:26-28).

God has lovingly given us a new and better covenant. It is vitally important that we be covenant keepers! It is a non-negotiable covenant. Love, grace and mercy are ever present. Let us never be guilty of haphazardly "despising" this most holy covenant, given and ordained by God. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:28-31).

PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTIONS

Winford Claiborne

While I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, I predict that the abortion controversy will never cease unless one of two things happens: Either the government will pass regulations forbidding abortion, except to save the life of the mother, or pro-life people get discouraged and quit fighting for the lives of innocent little babies. From a financial - if not from a moral - viewpoint, abortion will surely be stopped sometime in the future. We cannot continue to kill 1,600,000 babies each year without suffering severe financial problems. How, for example, are the children who survive going to be able to keep our social security system operational? The system is already in trouble but will inevitably get worse unless we cease destroying our future wage earners.

Maybe those who are pro-life will be able to convince the majority of the American people that abortion-on-demand is an unmitigated evil. Abortion has unquestionably desensitized many Americans to the value of all human life. Many of the vicious crimes in our nation are almost certainly related to our loss of respect for human life. Are we going to restore God's view of human beings? We can only do that if churches and families teach what the Bible says about the sacredness of all human life. David a long time ago wrote: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knows right well" (Psa. 139:14). Human beings are the handiwork of God almighty. Can we continue to destroy what God himself values?

Of this you can rest assured: Pro-life people are not going to cease fighting abortion. Some may get discouraged and drop by the wayside, but there will always be others to take their place. The fight against abortion is not the so-called "Christian right" agenda, although many in the media, in academic circles, in liberal politics, and religion would like for people to believe that ridiculous position. Right to life groups are not trying to restrict anyone's legitimate freedom, but we do not want to see our nation destroyed because of the immorality of abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, and suicide. We know that all these evils are related. Where abortion proliferates, euthanasia, infanticide, and suicide cannot be far behind. Derek Humphry and Jack Kavorkian prove that observation.

All forms of abortion are gruesome, violent, and inexcusable. It is difficult for me to imagine a greater evil in any nation. But, by far, the most inexplicable and thoroughly disgusting form of abortion is euphemistically called either "partial-birth abortion" or "late-term abortion." The Tennessee Right to Life organization has provided a description of what actually occurs in partial-birth

abortions. "Guided by Ultrasound, the abortionist grabs the baby's legs with forceps. The baby's leg is pulled out into the birth canal. The abortionist delivers the baby's entire body, except the head. The abortionist jams scissors into the baby's skull. The scissors are then opened to enlarge the hole (in the baby's head). The scissors are removed and a suction tube is inserted. The child's brains are sucked out causing the skull to collapse. The dead baby is then removed."

If you are not near nausea by my reading of this description of what takes place in these late-term abortions, I would not be able to understand your resistance to such horror. Such heartless treatment of a dog or cat or horse would land the perpetrator in jail - and should. And yet in Planned Parenthood clinics and in hospitals across our land, this procedure occurs on a regular basis. According to the supporters of abortion, this kind of abortion is very rare, but they know they are not telling the truth when they make these assertions. Obviously, it does not occur so often as some other forms of abortion, but it is not rare. Even if it occurred one time per year or one time per century, it would tell us about the moral values - or lack thereof - of all those involved.

The Star News of Hendersonville, Tennessee (Wednesday, October 30, 1996) published an advertisement sponsored by the Tennessee Right to Life committee. The advertisement had the heading, "What the Nurse saw ..." Part of the advertisement reads as follows: "In September, 1993, Brenda Pratt Shafer, a registered nurse with thirteen years of experience, was assigned by her nursing agency to an abortion clinic. Since nurse Shafer considered herself 'very pro-choice,' she didn't think this assignment would be a problem. She was wrong.

"This is what Nurse Shafer saw:

"I stood at the doctor's side and watched him perform a partial-birth abortion on a woman who was six months pregnant. The baby's heartbeat was clearly visible on the ultrasound screen. The doctor delivered the baby's body and arms, everything but his little head. The Baby's body was moving. His little fingers were clasping together. He was kicking his feet. The doctor took a pair of scissors and inserted them into the back of the baby's head, and the baby's arms jerked out in a flinch, a startle reaction, like a baby does when he thinks he might fall. The doctor opened the scissors up. Then he stuck the high-powered suction tube into the hole and sucked the baby's brains out. Now the baby was completely limp.

"I never went back to the clinic. But I am still haunted by the face of that little boy. It was the most perfect, angelic face I have ever seen" (p. C-8).

I believe I have an obligation to ask you some penetrating and provocative questions. How can the doctor who vowed first to do no harm ever participate in this unnecessary, unholy, unreasonable, and inexcusable operation? Any doctor who thinks he can justify this abominable evil is hereby challenged to do so. No wonder millions of Americans no longer trust their physicians and have turned to alternative therapies. I have no respect for most of these alternative therapies, such as, therapeutic touching, iridology, reflexology, and other ridiculous treatments, but I can understand why many of us no longer respect some doctors as we once did.

Doctors who perform any abortion - except to save the life of the mother - are sinning grievously against God and against the human family. Their only excuse - at least, from my viewpoint - is making money. Many doctors make hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars each year by specializing in killing babies. They may deny that what are in the mothers' wombs are babies, but they know better. So do all other right-thinking people. But, at least, they are getting rich performing abortions. What causes mothers to have their babies aborted? They are not getting rich engaging in their nefarious business. Do mothers not know that God is behind the conception which occurs? Do they not understand that they are interfering with God's plans? I am especially disturbed that any mother could have her baby aborted by partial-birth abortion. If they know what is going on in such abortions - and they have to know - how can they live with themselves and their God after such brutality?

Millions of Americans claim to be Christians. They attend church services regularly and participate in the activities of those churches. I am aware that many of these churches care precious little about the Bible. In some cases, they do not even pretend to follow the Bible. But what about the millions of Americans who claim to be evangelicals or fundamentalists or conservatives? If these Americans would take a stand against abortion and vote their convictions on election day, we could make radical changes regarding abortion and other evils in society. Tragically, many evangelicals are leaning toward liberalism and even toward postmodernism. A substantial number of evangelicals no longer believe in absolute truth. If there are no absolutes, how can abortion or infanticide or euthanasia be absolutely wrong? Is that the reason many evangelicals are not speaking out uncompromisingly against this great evil?

There is one rather surprising aspect of the partial-birth abortion controversy: The majority of our United States representatives and of our

Senators oppose partial-birth abortion. They even voted to ban it. But a man who claims to be a Christian vetoed what the House and Senate had done. Is he wiser than the majority of both houses in the United States Congress and the vast majority of the American people - both Democrats and Republicans? Or is he repaying a debt to the Women's Liberation Movement, the National Teachers Association, Planned Parenthood, and other radical groups in American society? Whatever the case, I am sick at heart that our president approves of one of the most horrible ways any human being can die.

But is not partial-birth abortion very rare? As a matter of fact, it is not. One estimate of this particular procedure was 500 per year. As I have already noted, this type of abortion does not happen so often as saline abortions, or the evacuation type abortions, but it occurs many times each year in our country. One American doctor, Dr. Martin Haskell, has performed over 1,000 partial-birth abortions. In a tape-recorded interview with American Medical News, Dr. Haskell said, "I'll be quite frank: most of my abortions are elective in that 20-24 week range ...80% are purely elective." That means, dear friends, that 800 of the abortions performed by Dr. Haskell were merely for the convenience of the mother. Her life was not in danger. She just did not want to have the baby.

The Right to Life advertisement says that some defenders of this procedure make false claims that anesthesia given to the mother kills the baby before the procedure. But the American Society of Anesthesiologists says anesthesia given to the mother does not kill or harm the baby - and it does not reliably protect the baby from pain (p. 0-8). If the anesthesia did kill the baby before it is aborted, would that make the procedure less objectionable? Those who engage in partial-birth abortion would still be guilty of shedding innocent blood. Among the things which God hates are "hands which shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:17). Are those who cause the suffering and death of innocent people prepared to explain their ungodly behavior to the God who will judge them in that final day?

Dr. Haskell, from whom I have just read, says that 80% of all partial-birth abortions are purely elective. But the overwhelming evidence shows his figures to be incorrect and misleading. Dr. Pamela Smith, Director of Medical Education in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago, has said, "There are absolutely no obstetrical situations in this country which require a partially delivered human fetus to be destroyed to preserve the health of the mother." Dr. Haskell says that 80% of partial-birth abortions are purely elective. Dr. Smith says 100% are purely elective.

If the facts I have presented to you today are not disturbing, it may be that your conscience has become so seared that it no longer functions. There are several reasons why the conscience ceases to function or ceases to be effective. The author of Hebrews accused his readers of being "dull of hearing. They had apparently been members of the church long enough they should have been teachers. Instead, they needed to be taught again the fundamentals of the faith. They should have been mature, but they were still babies in the faith. They had to take milk and not strong meat. "But strong meat belongs to them who are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:11-14).

Many in our culture seem to think there are no absolutes. If there are no absolutes, then whatever men and women choose to do cannot be absolutely wrong. If it is convenient for the mother to abort her baby or to kill it after it is born, how could anyone object since there are no absolutes? Oddly enough, those who claim there is no absolute truth or that we cannot know it, will call for a holy war against those who attempt to interfere with their practices - whether sexual or otherwise. If there are no absolutes, then those who attempt to stop the practice of abortion are not absolutely wrong.

And how do we go about stopping the abortion holocaust which has taken the lives of 35,000,000 babies since the infamous Roe v. Wade decision by our Supreme Court? It is my deep conviction that the solution cannot be political, at least, not in the foreseeable future. But there are solutions to moral and spiritual problems about which many in Washington have no knowledge. Let me suggest some ways to fight against the evils of abortion and not just partial-birth abortions. Churches which oppose abortion must have the courage to speak out against it. Do we realize that silence can be sinful? What if Jesus and his disciples had chosen to be silent about the evils of their day? What if preachers, priests, and rabbis had attacked the evils being perpetrated by the Nazis? Some of them may have done so, but there were not enough of them to stop the Holocaust. If all the churches in Germany had had the courage of a few of them, history would have been entirely different. Millions of Jews would be living today, and the blot of Nazism could have been avoided.

You may belong to a church which does not oppose abortion or does not speak out against it. In that case, you can use every opportunity to talk with fellow church members or neighbors about the unspeakable tragedy of killing our babies. A massive movement of concerned individuals could change the moral and spiritual atmosphere of our nation. Will you take advantage of every opportunity to oppose all evil - not just abortion?

Prayer is not a substitute for doing good works and speaking out against evil, but it is a powerful means of changing our world. James writes, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas. 5:16). The Revised Standard Version renders that passage: "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects." In his poem, "Idylls of the King, the Passing of Arthur," Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." How can Christians neglect to pray in view of these great truths?

Paul lived, preached, and wrote during the reign of the Roman Caesars, many of whom were as wicked as any leader can be. He knew firsthand how oppressive and vicious the Roman rulers were, and yet he encouraged Timothy: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3). Have we specifically prayed that God would overrule the politicians who favor the destruction of millions of our future generations?

I am not saying that the people for whom you vote in the local and national elections will have no bearing on our moral values, including our attitude toward abortion. But I am saying that the ultimate solution to our moral and spiritual problems is not political. Churches and individuals who oppose any kind of evil must have the courage to teach what the scriptures say on any given topic. We must pray that God will rule in the affairs of men. But his rule in our nation may relate to how we vote on the people who represent us in our state houses and in Washington.

I am convinced God wants to use his people to make ours a better world. He wants us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world - not just to convert the lost to Jesus Christ - but to improve the communities where we have to live and rear our children. Do you want your children to grow into maturity with no sense of the sacredness of all human life? What kind of world would that be?

MORAL ISSUES FACING THE NATION

Terry G. Jones

Jeremiah 7:28

The importance of truth must never be overlooked. Jesus provided much teaching on the subject during His earthly ministry. He said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Pilate asked Jesus the question, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). Earlier that night in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had prayed, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). So we must follow the truth of God's word so that we might be sanctified and freed from the bondage of sin.

Yet the Bible reveals that some prefer to ignore truth and believe a lie. That circumstance was characteristic of Isaiah's day. "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits'" (Is. 30:9-10). The apostle Paul warned Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The prophet Jeremiah lived at a time when the nation of Israel refused to comply with the truth of God. In Jeremiah 5:30-31 we find this sad commentary on the people. "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so." To prevent such from happening in our day, Paul instructs us to "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:15-16).

Failure to seek the truth of God will cause nations to be consumed with immorality and wickedness. When Israel rejected the truth and followed after false prophets, God said, "Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; They also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah" (Jer. 23:14). In Jeremiah 7:28, the Bible reveals three major flaws in Israel's responsibility toward truth.

DISOBEYED THE TRUTH

After affirming that Israel had been backsliding for generations, God instructed Jeremiah to “speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. So you shall say to them, ‘This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God...’” (Jer. 7:27-28a). God commanded Jeremiah to preach the truth in Israel but warned him that they would not obey. Let us notice three things in that regard.

Expectation Of God. From the creation of Adam, God has demanded obedience from His people. Following his descent from Mt. Sinai, Moses said, “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (Deut. 10:12-13). Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15).

Examples Of Disobedience. Not only does God expect obedience, He will not tolerate disobedience. He has supplied us with a multitude of examples of such in the Bible so that we might fully understand this. In 2 Peter 2:4-6, Peter informs us that false teachers will be destroyed just like the evil angels who sinned, the ancient world in Noah’s day, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Hebrew writer reminds us that Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years because of their disobedience to God. He then says, “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11). We ought to heed the examples of history.

End Of Disobedience. Nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of God, nor does He turn His back toward disobedience. “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil” (Eccl. 12:14). In Israel’s case, the Lord said, “...By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them – them nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters – for I will pour their wickedness on them” (Jer. 14:15-16). The Bible has served sufficient notice to all of creation that we will one day give an account before God for all that we have done (2 Cor. 5:10).

DISREGARDED THE TRUTH

God instructed Israel through the preaching of the prophets. In that way the nation came to understand what God expected of them and became aware of practices that required changing. However, in Jeremiah's day Israel had become hardened against the truth. They would not obey the voice of God, "nor receive correction" (Jer. 7:28b). Having disobeyed the truth, they disregarded the only thing that could change their sinful ways. Israel refused correction by the truth. Correction involves three things:

Recognition Of Sin. It is only when we recognize sin in our life that we will be able and willing to make confession of it. Confession is mandatory to receive forgiveness. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:8-9).

Repentance Of Sin. Repentance involves a change of heart and action. Israel refused correction because they were unwilling to repent. Jesus said, "...unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3). To the church at Ephesus, the Lord commanded, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-unless you repent" (Rev. 2:5).

Requesting Forgiveness Of Sin. Having recognized and repented of it, one must seek God's forgiveness. When Simon the sorcerer fell back into sin, Peter commanded him to "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22).

DISAPPEARANCE OF TRUTH

God continued with His commentary on the degraded condition of Israel by saying, "...Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth" (Jer. 7:28c). Israel's disobedience and disregard for the truth resulted in the disappearance of truth. They had rejected the prophets of God to follow the false prophets. Now they were unable to even recognize truth, let alone receive it. The truth no longer existed among them. This condition came about because Israel suffered from at least three problems.

Heart Problem. Jeremiah informs us that Israel's problem was a heart problem. Because of the false prophets, their heart was *deceived* (Jer. 14:14; 23:25-27); *defiled* (Jer. 4:14; 22:17); *defiant* (Jer. 5:23a; 6:16; 9:14); and *departed* (Jer. 5:23b).

Hearing Problem. Not only did they have a heart problem, but also a hearing problem. Jeremiah informs us that their hearing problem was due to the fact that their ears were *uncircumcised* (Jer. 6:10); *unwilling* (Jer. 13:10-11); and *useless* (Jer. 5:21).

Honesty Problem. Their heart problem and hearing problem was compounded by their honesty problem. This was a problem that began with their *lying prophets*. “And the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets prophesy lies in My name’” (Jer. 14:14; 23:16-17). Because of the dishonest prophets we see the *land profaned*. “Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets . . . profaneness has gone out into all the land” (Jer. 23:15). The problem was compounded further because the nation would not stand against the false prophets. As a matter of fact, Jeremiah says that the people *loved perversity*. “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so” (Jer. 5:31).

No nation had ever been so blessed as Israel. Yet, each generation seemed to become more sinful than the preceding one. God said, “Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers” (Jer. 7:25-26).

Their *disobedience to the truth* led them to *disregard the truth*. Their disregard eventually brought about the *disappearance of truth*. It was these circumstances that led them to openly commit the grossest immorality without shame. As a result, God punished them with seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Truly, “Righteous exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Pr. 14:34).

HOPE IN CHRIST

Albert E. Farley

Jeremiah and Lamentations reveal the darkest period of the history of the children of Israel. When these books closed, the great nation composed of the twelve tribes of Israel lay in ruins. The city of Jerusalem and the temple lay in heaps and ashes. Thousands of men, women, and children were dead, and thousands more had been carried into captivity and exile.

Why? What caused this great destruction of the nation of Israel? The history of the children of Israel – their sins, loss of hope, and destruction – is certainly an important study for the church of the twenty-first century. Romans 15:4 If we follow the path of God's people of old, we, too, will lose our hope and be destroyed.

In our lesson we desire to accomplish these things: (1) Examine the historical circumstances surrounding the work and mission of Jeremiah; (2) Look at some of the specific sins of the Jews – in commission and omission – which brought upon them their great destruction; (3) Analyze God's remedy for sin and the restoration of hope; (4) Consider the importance of hope; (5) Notice the fatal consequences of false hope; (6) Review Jeremiah's references to the Messiah or Christ; and (7) Study our hope in Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Brief Look at the History Surrounding the Prophecy of Jeremiah

Jeremiah's work extended over forty years and included the reigns of five kings and a governor.

Josiah was a good king and sought to lead a revival among God's people. It was in the 13th year of Josiah's reign that Jeremiah began his work. (Jeremiah 1:2)

Jehoahaz (Shallum), the son of Josiah, was evil. The king of Egypt then removed him, took him to Egypt. 2 Chronicles 36:1-3, Jeremiah 22:10-12

Jehoiakim (Eliakim), the son of Josiah, was very evil. 2 Chronicles 36:3-4. In his reign, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. Jehoiakim and others - along with some of the vessels of the temple - were carried into Babylon and the 70 years of exile began. 2 Kings 24:1-4, 2 Chronicles 36:6-7.

Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah), the son of Jehoiakim, then became king. He reigned only three months and ten days, but he did that which was evil. (2 Chronicles 36:9) Nebuchadnezzar came a second time to Jerusalem and carried him and many others into captivity. 2 Kings 24:10-16.

Zedekiah (Mattaniah), another son of Josiah, was very wicked. Nebuchadnezzar came the third time and besieged Jerusalem. After almost two years, Jerusalem fell and the city and temple were destroyed. All of the

vessels of the temple were brought to Babylon. Zedekia's sons were put to death before him and his eyes were put out. He and many others were carried to Babylon. Jeremiah 39:1-10.

After the fall of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar appointed **Gedaliah** to be the governor of the cities of Judah, and Jeremiah was placed into his care. 2 Kings 25:22, Jeremiah 39:11-14. Gedaliah and many others were murdered by Ishamel. Then, Johanan led many of the survivors to flee into Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to go with them. According to tradition, Jeremiah died in Egypt at the hands of his fellow-countrymen (ch. 43-44).

The Sins of the Jews

God's people were destroyed because of sin. The Lord's commission to Jeremiah was clear and sobering: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." (1:10)

Notice, first, some of the sinful things they **had** done: They had forsaken the Lord (1:16, 2:5, 2:7, 3:8, 5:19); burned incense to other gods and prophesied by Baal (2:8, 7:9); defiled the Lord's land; made God's heritage an abomination (2:7); pastors transgressed against the Lord (2:8); changed their glory for that which doth not profit (2:11); backslidings increased (3:8, 5:6); played the harlot upon every green hill with many lovers (2:20, 3:1,6); turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine (2:21); had gods according to the number of their cities (2:28); devoured their prophets with the sword (2:30); forgot the Lord days without number (2:32); blood of innocents found in their skirts (2:34, 7:6); rebellious against the Lord (4:17, 5:23, 6:28); foolish, sottish (silly), no understanding, wise to do evil (4:22); committed adultery and assembled by troops in harlots' houses; wearied themselves to commit adultery; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife (5:8, 9:5); belied the Lord (5:12); set traps to catch men (5:26); prophets prophesied falsely, priests bare rule by their means, and the people loved to have it so; the word of the Lord was to them a reproach; they had no delight in it (6:10); walked with slanderers; they were all corrupters (6:28); opposed strangers, fatherless, and widows (7:4); turned temple into a den of thieves (7:11); gathered wood, kneaded dough, made cakes to the queen of heaven (7:18); walked in the counsel and in the imaginations of their evil hearts and went backward and not forward (7:24); hardened their neck (7:26); set abominations in the house of God and polluted it (7:30); burned their sons and daughters in the fire (7:31); gloried in their wisdom, might, and riches (9:23); learned the ways of the heathen (10:2); brutish (10:8); conspired, broke the covenant of the Lord (11:9); destroyed the Lord's vineyard (12:10); loved to wander (14:10).

Notice, also, some of the things Jeremiah said they **had not** done: They did not say, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of Egypt (2:6); they that

handled the law knew not the Lord (2:8, 9:3); did not fear the Lord (2:19, 5:24); did not obey the voice of the Lord (3:13, 9:13, 11:8); had no knowledge to do good (4:22); knew not the way nor the judgment of the Lord (5:4, 8:7); without understanding; had eyes and saw not; ears and heard not (5:21); judged not the cause of the fatherless (5:26); were not ashamed – neither could they blush (6:15); would not walk in the old paths; would not hearken or incline their ear (6:16, 7:24); answered not the call of the Lord (7:13); would not return to the Lord (8:5, 6); were not valiant for truth and would not speak it (9:3,5); refused to know the Lord (9:6); did not seek the Lord (10:21); did not refrain their feet (14:10); had not kept the law (16:11); would not hear, nor receive instruction (17:23).

Judah's Only Hope

It was in the midst of these awful sins that Jeremiah cried, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (6:16) This plea – which forms the basis of our lectureship theme – reveals the willingness of God to forgive his people and to spare them from the coming doom. This plea offered hope. There are many such pleas throughout the book of Jeremiah. "Return ... and I will heal your backslidings .. the Lord is the salvation of Israel" (3:22) "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved." (4:14) See also 5:1, 7:1, and 36:2.

God's people rejected His plea. "But they said, We will not walk therein." (6:16) Jehoiakim's response was typical of the nation. When the book of Jeremiah was brought before him in the winter house and read, Jehoiakim cut the leaves with his penknife and cast them into the fire. (36:22-23) This did not silence Jeremiah, however, for the Lord then commanded him to write, by Baruch, all these words again on another roll – and there were added many like words besides! (36:27-32)

As a consequence of their many sins and because they would not listen to the tearful pleas of Jeremiah, the Jews brought upon themselves the great calamities recorded in this book.

The Importance of Hope

Hope is universal in its need within the heart of the human family.

When the Bible speaks of hope it speaks of "trustful expectation, particularly with reference to the fulfillment of God's promises; favorable and confident expectation." When the world uses the word "hope" it speaks of what one may want to happen or what one desires to happen – in spite of any lack of assurance or promise that it will happen.

Man's need for hope and his futile efforts to hold and sustain it without Christ is, I think, expressed in Alexander Pope's poem, "An Essay on Man," Epistle I, Line 95, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast: Man never is, but always to be blest."

False Hope

In casting away the hope that Jeremiah held out, the wicked kings, priests, and people of Judah cast their hope upon that which was false. Rejecting God, they trusted in the gods of their imagination. "Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble." (11:12) Rejecting God's Word, they trusted in their own wisdom. (10:23) Rejecting God's prophet, they heaped to themselves false prophets. (23:16, 21, 30, 31) Rejecting righteousness and godliness, they put their trust in their riches. (22:13)

Jeremiah asked Zedekiah, "Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, the king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?" (37:18) In spite of Jeremiah's sober warnings, the people had believed the false prophets who cried out, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (8:11) They convinced the people that Egypt was coming to their rescue, but the false promise never came. In 8:20, the Bible says of them, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (See 8:14)

The Promise of the Righteous Branch

Doom was coming. Babylon would destroy Jerusalem and the land would be laid waste. But this destruction of the kingdom of Judah was going to be temporary. The Lord said, "That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." (29:10)

When Jeremiah spoke of the return of God's people from exile, he spoke of their hope. As he spoke of their return to Zion, he also spoke of the coming of the Righteous Branch of the house of David. In so doing, he spoke of our hope. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (23:5,6; 33:15-16)

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake,

although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (31:31-34)

It was according to God's purpose to bring Jesus into the world through David – of the tribe of Judah. It was necessary for Judah to be preserved unto the fullness of the time. Galatians 4:4. Judah would repent during the years of exile and the remnant would return, rebuild the temple, rebuild the walls, and re-establish worship and service to him. The New Testament book of Hebrews verifies that this is a prophecy of Christ Jesus. (Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:15-17)

Our Hope is in Christ

The only hope Jerusalem and Judah had was God. Jeremiah prayed, "O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble ..." (14:8) They rejected their hope and were destroyed.

Today, our only hope is in Jesus Christ, the Righteous Branch of the house of David. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jeremiah 17:7, 8

When Jesus was presented unto the Lord at the temple, Simeon, said "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;" Luke 2:25-32 Anna also gave thanks unto the Lord and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Luke 2:36-38 When Andrew found Jesus, he said to his brother, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." John 1:35-41

Jesus established a new and living way. Hebrews 10:20. This new and living way provides for us a better hope. (Hebrews 7:19) This new hope is based upon a better testament (Hebrews 7:22), a better covenant (8:6), better promises (8:6), better sacrifices (9:23), a better country (11:16), and a better resurrection. (11:40)

Dear friends, there is only one true hope. Ephesians 4:3 The great majority of people today are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" Ephesians 2:12. Like the people of Jeremiah's day,

the great majority of people today have turned to materialism, gratification of the flesh, false religion and denominationalism for their hope. The majority of the world is trusting in false teachers and false hope. Our plea is the plea of the Lord, spoken through his faithful prophet, Jeremiah, over twenty-six hundred years ago, "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6:16

Will we hear this plea and live, or will we, like them say, "We will not walk therein." The choice is ours to make. May the Lord help us all to say with Jeremiah, in Lamentations 3:40, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."

THE RESTORATION PLEA

John M. Brown

TEXT: **Jeremiah 6:16**

INTRODUCTION:

A. Churches of Christ occupy a unique position in the religious world and issue forth a unique plea: *ours is a call to return to first century, New Testament Christianity in every particular.*

1. We do not call for the reformation of existing, competing religious denominations, but we urge a return to the original church - the church that Christ promised, built, purchased, owns, and loves.
2. "To restore" means *"to give back or make restitution of; to bring back to a former condition; to put back in place; to re-establish; to reinstate, reconstruct, reproduce, revive.*
3. Many fail to understand this plea: *we are not contending that "our denomination" is better than another's denomination (We don't profess to have "a denomination.") - but rather we urge the abandonment of all man-made denominations to be simply members of the New Testament church.*
4. We urge people to go back: beyond human leaders to Christ Himself; beyond human creeds to the Bible; beyond human denominations to the church established by Christ in Jerusalem in the first century.

B. Note the principle of "going back" in our text:

1. Jeremiah urges the people to STAND, SEE, and ASK for the *old paths!*
2. These "old paths" contain the "good way" in which the people ought to "walk therein" to "find rest for your souls."
3. Unfortunately, some in that day steadfastly refused such a course: *it was the right way, nonetheless!*
4. Our plea is RIGHT: *it is logical, consistent, unifying, productive, and scriptural.*

C. Consider the meaning and implications of THE RESTORATION PLEA:

I. IT IS A PLEA FOR CHRIST.

- A. A plea for the PERSON of Christ: John 5:27; 14:6; Matthew 16:13-16; 2 Corinthians 2:1-5
- B. A plea for the WORD of Christ: John 6:63; Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 24:35; John 12:48
- C. A plea for the AUTHORITY of Christ: Matthew 17:1-5; 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18
- D. A plea for the CHURCH of Christ: Matthew 16:13-18; 15:13; Luke 8:11; 1 Timothy 3:15
- E. A plea for the NAME of Christ: Acts 4:12; 11:26; Philippians 2:9-11

II. IT IS A PLEA FOR THE BIBLE AS THE SOLE AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

A. The written word is to be our authority - *our only authority* - in all religious matters.

- 1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- 2. John 20:30-31
- 3. 1 Peter 4:11
- 4. 2 Peter 1:3
- 5. 1 Peter 1:22-23
- 6. 2 Timothy 1:13

B. The purity of truth must be maintained: Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 3:16; Revelation 22:18-19; Matthew 15:7-9

III. IT IS A PLEA FOR THE CHURCH AS CHRIST BUILT IT.

- A. The promise: Matthew 16:13-18
- B. The fulfillment: Acts 2; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:25-33; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Luke 8:11

C. Apostasy was foretold: Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2:3

1. History records this departure from the Word and will of God.
2. The need then is a restoration of the church as God ordained it.
(Note that principle at work in 2 Kings 22-23; Ezra 7:10, 26; 9:10-12; 10:3; Nehemiah 8:14-17; 13:1-3.)

D. The IDENTIFYING MARKS of Christ's church:

1. THE RIGHT BUILDER: Matthew 16:18
2. THE RIGHT FOUNDATION: 1 Corinthians 3:11
3. THE RIGHT BEGINNING: Luke 24:46-47 (Isaiah 2:2-3); Acts 2
4. THE RIGHT DOCTRINE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 John 9-11
5. A SPIRITUAL HOUSE: 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:15
6. THE RIGHT NAME: Acts 4:12; Romans 16:16
7. THE RIGHT PLAN OF SALVATION: John 6:45; 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 47; Hebrews 5:8-9
8. THE RIGHT HEAD: Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18
9. THE RIGHT ORGANIZATION: Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3
10. THE RIGHT WORSHIP: John 4:23-24

E. The principle of restoration: If a church is right in its builder and foundation, its beginning and doctrine, its work and name, its head and organization, its worship and teaching regarding salvation, *it cannot be the wrong church*. On the other hand, if it is wrong in these matters, *it cannot be the right church*.

F. The LORD'S CHURCH stands in stark contrast to human denominationalism: *in teaching, in organization, concerning the concept of God's pattern, about fellowship, regarding salvation, and about the nature of the church itself!*

CONCLUSION:

A. The restoration plea is Valid! Right! Biblical! Successful! *May it thrive!*

B. As the history of God's people (through the Old Testament onward) is a history of departing from God's way, *so the continual need is to call men and women back to the way of God.*

C. Let us proceed forward with this plea: *the doctrine OF Christ, salvation THROUGH Christ, unity IN Christ, and consecration TO Christ.*

JEREMIAH – A LEADER IN TIME OF CRISIS

Michael P. Reese

Times of crisis call for strong leaders. In the seventh century B.C. Israel was in spiritual crisis. The nation, rather than trusting God, sought their own alliances with neighboring nations. Assyria had been the powerhouse nation for centuries. But with its fall at the end of the seventh century B.C., Egypt and Babylon emerged. Judah's kings ignored God's prophets, for the most part, and attempted alliances with both Babylon and Egypt at different times. Judah's wicked rebellion and idolatry could only be remedied by full scale national and personal repentance. This was not to be; so Judah was allowed, by God, to enter into Babylonian captivity.

For more than two centuries God's people had ignored the prophets. God used 70 years of Babylonian captivity to salvage the spiritual remnant and preserve the faithful seedline through which the Messiah would come. After the captivity, Judah would gain strength, renew, and refocus until the "fulness of time" with the birth of Jesus.

It was against this background that God called a young Hebrew lad of twenty to be his inspired mouthpiece to Judah through this transition period. From the time of his calling, for the next forty or fifty years, Jeremiah would preach, prophesy, direct, and confront Judah.

Jeremiah certainly had tremendous leadership qualities that resulted in God's spiritual remnant's being preserved and returned to the Promised Land. Join us now as we attempt to discover these leadership qualities of Jeremiah and then, upon discovery of Jeremiah's leadership qualities, how we can apply these leadership qualities into God's servants of today.

First and foremost Jeremiah followed God. This leadership quality is so basic that it is often overlooked. Jeremiah did not follow the weakened kings of the nation nor the popular doctrines of his day. Jeremiah's allegiance was fully and wholly to God.

Early on, the prophet realized God had a plan for his life (Jeremiah 1:5). Much like Isaiah and Moses, Jeremiah recognized his inadequacies separate and apart from God (1:6). But he soon realized the victory was guaranteed by God - "and they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.

God, today, has placed talented and gifted leaders in His church (Ephesians 4 and Romans 12). Leaders today must first and foremost please God. The temptation so often is to please men and tickle ears, to go with that which is popular rather than that which is godly and righteous. However, God's leaders today must realize that their place is by divine appointment (Acts 20:28). Therefore, it is essential, that God be pleased rather than men.

Jeremiah also realized his message was by divine appointment. God's instructions were, "---gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee": (Jeremiah 1:17). In addition, Jeremiah was clear and concise in his message. Notice the unusual imagery of Jeremiah 2:13, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Also, notice his apt description of the people. "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." (Jeremiah 3:25). Concerning Judah's moral bankruptcy Jeremiah wrote, "they were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife." (Jeremiah 5:8). Jeremiah was not unkind but he was direct and to the point.

Leaders today must convey the truth in love. Often important decisions go unmade; sin goes unchecked while leaders fail to clearly and concisely communicate God's will. The Lord's church is sorely in need of godly leaders who will once again "be instant in season and out of season, who will reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering."

Jeremiah was steadfast. In chapter 25 Jeremiah spoke of the imminent 70 years of captivity and how God would accomplish this through heathen nations. At that time Jeremiah had been prophesying 23 years to no avail. This message was not popular. Still, Jeremiah continued to sound forth God's message. The audience, including the priests, the prophets and all the people (26:8) called for his death.

Against all this adversity what was Jeremiah's reaction? This is answered in Jeremiah 26:13 & 14, "Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you."

Jeremiah stared even death in the face and didn't blink. Sometimes leaders today need to dig in their heels and stare ungodly opposition squarely in the

face with the attitude of Jeremiah - "do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you."

Jeremiah was willing to confront error. Confrontation in any form is unpleasant. To enjoy confrontation is ungodly and unhealthy. Eventually, however, confrontation among God's people is inevitable.

Hananiah of old prophesied falsely. The yoke of the king of Babylon had not been broken as Hananiah wrongly reported. Jeremiah set the record straight. His response to Hananiah was, "Thus saith the Lord: thou hast broken the yokes of wood: but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron." (Jeremiah 28:13). Hananiah had made the people to trust a lie (Jeremiah 28:15).

Those today, who come with "smooth talk and fair speech" making God's people trust a lie shackle the hearers with yokes of iron. Like Jeremiah of old, leaders today must forcefully set the record straight. God's message from Pentecost has not changed. The destiny of those who would change or corrupt that pure message is clear - "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8). Would to God that leaders today had the courage to stand firmly for the truth.

Balance in all aspects of life is a principle that is stressed in many circles today. Lest an inaccurate picture of Jeremiah is painted as a man continually stressing what was wrong with Judah, it must be noted that he stayed focused on the big picture. Possibly no other portion of Jeremiah's book so poignantly portrays this principle as his letter to those captives already in Babylon found in chapter 29.

His instructions were clear. God would use the hand of Babylon to complete his chastening of Judah. Go on with life as usual - build houses, plant gardens, raise families but, remember, this is only temporary. As Jeremiah noted, "... after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." (Jeremiah 29:10).

Jeremiah did not let the urgent take the place of the essential. Sure their lives were in turmoil; lives were even being lost. But in the future God's purpose would prevail. Jeremiah stayed focused on the ultimate goal of God's getting His people ready for the coming Messiah. Jeremiah realized that every action at that time only served God's purpose. Babylonian captivity was not the end of Judah. Captivity was God's means toward the end of salvation for mankind.

Today God's people are faced with turmoil and opposition on every side. It is so easy to lose sight of the "big picture." God's plan is for all men to be saved. He is patiently seeking repentance of all mankind. Leaders today must stay focused on the ultimate goal of heaven and realize that each new day with each new challenge merely serves as a means toward that ultimate end.

Sure, much of Jeremiah's message was negative, but it was also very positive. God and his faithful remnant would prevail.

Another great leadership quality of Jeremiah was his trust in and obedience to God. Possibly no greater exhibit of this trust and obedience can be found than when Jeremiah purchased the field of Anathoth. The Babylonian army had besieged Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was thrown into prison. What does he then do? He makes arrangements to buy a piece of land that he can occupy after the captivity. He bought the land, paid for it, and had the deed recorded according to ancient law and custom. Why did Jeremiah do this? The answer is found in Jeremiah 32:15, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."

God's leaders today must not only preach the word they must also trust God enough to obey His word. This means "walking the talk," "practicing what we preach," or however else we choose to convey this thought. Leaders lead most effectively by example. Think of the effect Jeremiah's purchase of this land had on Judah. Think of the effect leaders today have on God's spiritual Israel when they walk carefully in the footsteps of Jesus.

At some point in time all leaders will suffer a persecution - either physically, emotionally, or socially. Another great quality of Jeremiah is that he was not discouraged by persecution. Jeremiah's written work was burned by Jehoiakim (chapter 36); he was cast into prison (chapter 37), then eventually thrown into the muddy dungeon (chapter 38). He had to watch silently while Jerusalem was taken (Jeremiah 38:28), but he was not overcome by this persecution.

In Jeremiah's final message to Judah there rang forth a clear message of hope. "Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine or theirs." (Jeremiah 44:28). Like a breeze of fresh spring air Jeremiah's message of hope and trust refreshed the oppressed nation.

Today God's leaders must stand forth like a beacon in the night, gently guiding the flock to safe passage amongst all that Satan uses to shipwreck our faith. Positive attitudes, while standing firmly on God's solid ground, must be the order of the day.

Some would say that leaders are born not made. While God does bless some with exceptional personalities and abilities, for the most part, God's leaders today, like Jeremiah of old are forged on the anvil of life experience while ever trusting in the abiding presence of the Living God. Like God's faithful servant of old, God's leaders today must follow God, they must remain steadfast, confront error, keep focused on the big picture, be clear and concise in communicating God's will, trust and obey God at all cost and never lose heart in the face of persecution. Leaders developing these qualities will certainly be easy to follow as they chart the course through the wilderness into the promised land.

EVOLUTIONARY FRAUD

Winford Claiborne

Professional scientists probably rank higher in honesty and in integrity in the eyes of most Americans than those in almost any other profession. After all, these men and women are "scientists" and everyone knows that scientists have no axes to grind. Their only interest is in the discovery of truth with a capital "T". Men and women of science have no hidden agenda; they are merely searching for the answers to the mysteries of the universe - whatever those answers happen to be. If their discoveries run counter to long-held beliefs and opinions, scientists are willing to change when new evidence is presented. Is this your view of science and of scientists?

As a rule, our confidence in scientists is so great that when they speak on topics outside their particular disciplines we tend to accept their pronouncements as if they came down from Mount Sinai. For example, if a man has an earned doctorate in biology, we are often very much impressed with his statements on theology or philosophy or politics. A given scientist may know nothing - or practically nothing - about subjects outside his discipline, but because he is a highly respected scientist, his words become law and gospel. Carl Sagan was a good example of a man who was nationally known for his knowledge of astronomy and who thought he knew all there was to know in other fields, but who was abysmally ignorant on moral and spiritual issues. Millions of Americans had great admiration for Dr. Sagan because he was a scientist but do not know that many experts in the field of astronomy thought of Dr. Sagan as a popularizer - not a reputable scientist. Yet because Dr. Sagan had an earned doctorate in astronomy, he was considered to be an expert in other areas. For example, when Dr. Sagan affirmed: "The Cosmos (meaning the universe) is all there is and all there ever was," that is not a scientific statement. It is a philosophical or theological observation. From a philosophical or theological viewpoint, Dr. Sagan had the sophistication of a guinea pig.

Our respect and reverence for scientists probably stems to a great degree from the spectacular work many scientists have done in the past fifty or so years. Technological advances in my lifetime almost defy the imagination: television, supersonic travel, space exploration, medical advances, and hundreds and hundreds of other accomplishments. To the average man these inventions and discoveries seem almost miraculous. How can we avoid standing in awe of these men and women

who have done so much in such a short time? Surely such scientists would never besmirch the good name of science to sustain their pet theories.

I am not ungrateful for those inventions and discoveries which make our lives more comfortable: air conditioning, safe automobiles, computers, refrigerators, dishwashers, and such like. But all of these scientific advances must be examined in a realistic light. We must not place too much faith in science and in scientists. Scientists-whether biological, geological or otherwise - are men and women with the same temptations, the same weaknesses and the same ambitions which characterize the rest of the human family. Some scientists are desperately searching for some fact or discovery which will make them famous and perhaps even immortal. They would like to go down in history books alongside Louis Pasteur, Sir Francis Bacon, James Watson, Francis Crick, Joseph Lister, and Jonas Salk. But that ambition must not be allowed to cover up any fraudulent activities.

Am I implying that some scientists would actually fudge a little on their experiments or discoveries to prove their brilliance? Would they skew the results of their research to prove their own theories and biases? It is my considered judgment that the majority of scientists would not be unfair or dishonest for any reason, but there are some who have been dishonest and probably some who will be dishonest in the future.

Tragically, the training some scientists receive in American colleges and universities leads them in the direction of fraud and deception. Their education - especially in the biological sciences - may actually prejudice them in such a way they may not be able to understand some truths. Actually, no one - scientist or otherwise - is completely free from bias. All of us - including scientists and theologians - must make a concerted effort not to allow our prejudices to prevent our seeing the truth when it is presented to us.

Tragically and inexplicably, frauds have been perpetrated by scientists in all academic disciplines - chemistry, biology, anthropology, sociology and psychology - but I am concentrating today on scientific frauds which were designed to establish the theory of evolution. I am calling our lesson today "Evolutionary Fraud." Please listen with an open mind. If you have questions or comments, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Although evolutionary theories of man's origin have been around for thousands of years, defining evolution is not an easy task. One of the

reasons that it is so difficult to define evolution is because there are so many different theories of evolution - organic, theistic, emergent, salutatory - and others. Negatively, evolution does not just mean change, although obviously change is involved in all theories of evolution. Everyone who has his eyes open knows that changes take place in the world of living organisms. All living creatures experience some change on a regular basis. Many kinds of sheep, cattle, hogs, dogs and cats have undergone enormous changes in the past several hundred years. The changes I am describing are generally called "microevolution" as opposed to "macroevolution." "Microevolution" refers to small changes which occur in plants and animals. "Macroevolution" says, in effect, that one animal can become a different kind of animal over a period of time. "Macroevolution" is what most people have in mind when they speak of the theory of evolution. Actually, the word "microevolution" ought not to be used at all since it is confusing in the minds of many people. Small changes occur within various kinds of animals - as almost all people will freely admit - but a fish does not become a dog, nor a fish a bird. Such radical changes have not occurred and cannot. It is biologically impossible.

One of the very best books available on evolution was written by Dr. John Klotz, professor of natural science, Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. Dr. Klotz's book has the title, Genes, Genesis and Evolution and was published in 1972 by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. Dr. Klotz provides the following definition of evolution. "It is the concept that nonliving materials became alive through natural processes by chance alone, that all things now alive are descended from a single (organism) or a very few initially living organisms, and that man himself is the product of a process of chance development over millions of years from nonhuman ancestors" (p.9).

I have two questions I must ask before we examine some cases of evolutionary fraud. What are the implications for moral and spiritual values if the evolutionary hypothesis were true? How does one explain the popularity of the theory of organic evolution? My friends, the truthfulness of the theory of evolution is not a matter of indifference. Its implications for every phase of life are serious. I want to list five of those implications. Evolution involves a complete repudiation of the scriptures as God's inspired word. It denies the creation account as revealed in Genesis. It robs life of its meaning. What ultimate meaning could life have if we have descended from the animals? Evolution destroys the basis of all moral values. I am aware of Antony Flew's book, Evolutionary Ethics, but the title is self-contradictory. Evolution

removes any ultimate responsibility for our actions and hence cancels any possibility of judgement. You may destroy a dog for killing a child, but you do not believe the dog is morally culpable. There are probably other implications of the evolutionary theory, but these are adequate for our purposes today.

My other question is "How does one explain the popularity of the evolutionary hypothesis?" Our educational system must share much of the blame for evolution's popularity. Since virtually all references to God and to Christianity have been legally removed from our public schools, evolution is the number one explanation for the origin of man and of the universe. Children's television programs dealing with the origin of men and of the animals all glorify the evolutionary theory. Sometimes that fact is obscured by a mass of meaningless or deliberately deceptive phrases, but evolution permeates many children's television programs. In addition, many of the programs on the Discovery Channel and on Animal Planet are saturated with evolution.

If you think the evolutionists are not serious about the god of evolution, you need to do some investigation on your own. There are numerous books which explain what evolution is, how important is for many science, philosophy and theology departments in our colleges and universities and the penalties both students and teachers may have to pay when they object to evolution. I think you would be surprised; I hope you would be disappointed and disgusted. After all, your tax dollars pay for the promulgation of the evolutionary theory and of many other anti-Christian beliefs and practices.

There have been many attempts on the part of evolutionists to commit fraudulent acts in support of evolution. I understand the seriousness of this charge, but there is absolutely no question about it. M. Bowden, an English scientist, in 1977 wrote a book with the title, Ape-Men: Fact or Fallacy? (Bromley, Kent: Sovereign Publications). Bowden's book successfully exposes some of the fraudulent idea being promoted by various evolutionists. He shows that a Frenchman by the name of Eugene Dubois concealed human skulls for thirty years. One of Dubois' supporters, Professor Ernst Haeckel, faked some scientific illustrations. Investigations have clearly shown that the Neanderthal men were true men and not missing links between men and the animals. Their strange appearances resulted from rickets and syphilis. They are not in an evolutionary sense the progenitors of modern man.

Dr. Mary Leakey from the famous family of anthropologists discovered footprints which she said were 3.6 million years old. But they were clearly human footprints. Dr. Bowden accuses the scientific establishment of deliberately suppressing the publication of unwelcome evidence on evolution. These are very serious charges - as I mentioned a few minutes ago - but they are true beyond the shadow of any doubt. Dr. Bowden says that fossil hunters often have a subconscious desire to fit their discoveries to their preconceptions, whether or not they are in line with current expert opinion. Bowden makes mention of a French author, Vayson de Predenne, who wrote the book, Archeological Frauds, in 1925. De Predenne does not accuse the scientists of being dishonest (p.2). I think de Predenne is being very generous in refusing to call some of the fossil hunters deceptive and dishonest. But when a scientist deliberately alters fossil remains or keeps them hidden from the scientific community, I would call that dishonest.

Do you remember from your high school or college days seeing a strange creature in your science textbook with the name Piltdown Man? Did you know that the Piltdown Man is one of the greatest hoaxes ever perpetrated in the name of science? Dr. J. S. Weiner's book, The Piltdown Forgery (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), gives a wealth of material on the Piltdown fraud. At the time of the publication of his book - 1955 - Dr. Weinger was a Reader in Physical Anthropology at Oxford University. He was one of the scientists involved in the exposure of the Piltdown forgery. His book makes fascinating reading.

Dr. Weiner writes: "On December 18, 1912, Arthur Smith Woodward and Charles Dawson announced to a great and expectant scientific audience the epoch-making discovery of a remote ancestral form of a man - The Dawn Man or the Piltdown man" (p.1). The discovery was hailed in the press and in the scientific community as "a veritable confirmation of evolutionary theory." The fossil was promptly named Eanthropus dawsoni in honor of the discoverer (p. 5). Sir Arthur Keith, a distinguished anthropologist and paleontologist, sang the praises of the Piltdown discovery. "That we should discover such a race, as Piltdown, sooner or later, has been an article of faith in the anthropologist's creed" (p.6). I hope you took note of the expression, "an article of faith in the anthropologist's creed." Does that give you some insight into how badly evolutionists wanted to find some confirmation of their faith in evolution? Does it tell you why a scientist might fudge just a little on his search for the missing link?

W. J. Sollas expressed the excitement of the scientific community when he wrote: "In Eanthropus dawsoni we seem to have realized a creature which has already attained human intelligence but had not yet wholly lost its ancestral jaw and fighting teeth" (p.6). There is an enormous amount of material in Dr. Weiner's book which allows us to see how men who are determined to prove their evolutionary views will go to great lengths to alter and then to hide what they have done from those who have a right to know. But to make a long and discouraging journey short, let me say bluntly and very correctly: The Piltdown man was a deliberate hoax. The only question which may never be answered completely is who the culprits were. We know Charles Dawson, the discoverer of the fossil, was involved. But who were his co-conspirators? No reputable scientist has implicated Smith Woodward, but many scientists believe that a Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, worked with Charles Dawson in deceiving the public and a substantial number of scientists. Teilhard de Chardin was a staunch evolutionist who was determined to prove the theory of evolution at all costs. The deception was discovered, but not all the deceivers were identified.

Dr. Weiner says that the "creation of the composite ape-man, the Piltdown, was evidently an elaborate affair; much thought and work had gone into the preparation of the fraudulent jaw and in the provision of the other items of deception" (p.53). He says "the objective evidence for the deception was overwhelming ... The Piltdown 'men' were forgeries, the tools were falsifications, and the animal remains were planted" (p.78). Can honorable men be involved in such deliberate hoaxes - whether scientific or theological?

Dr. Weiner is a committed evolutionist and thinks the so-called "missing links" of which Charles Darwin spoke are no longer missing. He concludes his book with this observation: "Though today we are still far from an understanding of the many matters concerning men's origins, we are in no doubt about the reality of the transformation which has brought Man from a simian status to his sapiens form and capability" (p.205). In other words, there is no doubt about our development from monkeys or simians to our current status as human beings. But is Dr. Weiner right? Are there no doubts about our evolutionary development?

Everyone who believes the Bible to be the word of God denies what Dr. Weiner affirmed. We know by divine revelation that God almighty created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). We know evolution did not occur. It is absolutely unthinkable that all the rich variety of our world could have evolved from one cell and that by chance. I am in agreement

with the title of R. C. Sproul's book, Not a Chance. We are not here by accident; we are here by the creative act of our heavenly Father. You can place your complete confidence in that truth.

MORAL ISSUES CONFRONTING THE HOME

By Steve Higginbotham

All would probably very readily agree that the moral and spiritual fabric of our society has begun to unravel. Furthermore, not many debates could be generated if one stated that many of our social ills (crime, drug abuse, lack of respect for authority, divorce, etc.) could be attributed to a breakdown in the home. There is no question that our nation's homes are in a state of crises. Today more than 30 percent of our nation's children are raised in a single parent home. Over the past 50 years, our country's divorce rate has climbed by more than 250 percent. And in 1991, Peter Kim and James Patterson revealed in their book, *The Day America Told The Truth*, that 31% of America's married couples admitted to having been guilty of infidelity.

Strange as it may seem, not everyone is concerned with the breakdown of the home. Some believe that the home, at least as God would have it, has outlived its usefulness. One author said, "The old ship of matrimony that God launched in the Garden of Eden has been caught in a cyclone of change...Wedlock is a padlock which leads to deadlock...and the first institution God established has outlived its usefulness" (*Rx For Marital Illness*). Another couple stated in their book entitled *Open Marriage*, "The patriarchal marriage system of the Judeo-Christian tradition, based on an agrarian economy, is simply outmoded today."

In spite of what some are saying, it is my conviction that the problem with today's home is not the divine arrangement of God, but, rather, God's divine arrangement for the home is the solution to the problem. If men would acknowledge that the home is God's idea and follow his directions in regard to it, many of the problems we are now experiencing would vanish.

As I observe our society, I see several definite threats to the home as God would have it. One such threat is the underestimated influence of the media (television, music, Internet). I am unaware of any one single thing that molds our values any more than television. While I would like to say that the Bible molds most of our family values, reality says otherwise. For years we have been told that television is only a reflection of our society, and does not shape it. Who can believe it?

We often find ourselves saying bad things about the television. We stand up and are counted among the faithful. When given the chance,

we express our moral diatribe against the evils of television. Then we turn right around and put it in charge of raising our children.

Friends, I'm not interested in telling you what you should or should not watch. But I do want to remind you that as you watch television, listen to the radio, and browse the Internet; watch, listen, and browse as one who must give an account (2 Corinthians 5:9-10). Either we begin to supervise these activities, or resign ourselves to having our children adopt the values they teach in regard to sexuality, marriage, love, and God.

Another moral threat to the home is that sexual perversion is being promoted as being acceptable from a variety of sources. Our nation's educational system often promotes an immoral view regarding human sexuality. One sociology textbook stated, "The demand that marriage should entail sexual monogamy may have made sense in an era when contraception was largely impossible and questions of lineage were of considerable moment" (*Sociology: Concepts & Characteristics*).

As hard as it may seem to believe, even some of our nation's religious leaders are steering people down an immoral road regarding human sexuality. Burton Cohen said in his book, *Take A Bishop Like Me*, "My own personal thinking at the present time is leaning toward the view that sexual activity between consenting adults outside marriage is not sinful per se...I cannot believe that two lonely people comforting one another with physical love is necessarily wrong, even if they are not married."

Then there is our society in general that tolerates, accepts, and condones nearly every form of sexual perversion one could possibly imagine. I cannot help but hear the words of Isaiah echoing in the distance, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

God planned marriage for the benefit of man and arranged it to bring about man's well being. Had sexual freedom been good for man, God wouldn't have restricted it to marriage. God's revelation, common sense, and human experience all testify to the fact that sexual promiscuity is wrought with hazards. Yet, these voices advocating "freedom," if followed, will bind heavy burdens on our children.

Another threat to the home is absentee parents. God has given parents, fathers and mothers, the responsibility to train, instruct, and

discipline their children (Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 5:14). How can this be adequately accomplished when parents hardly ever see their children? Some parents are so consumed with pursuing a certain lifestyle or a standard of living that their children become little more than an inconvenience that have to be shuffled from one baby-sitter to the next.

Who has the greatest influence on children in shaping their values? The person with whom the children spend the majority of their time. In other words, many parents have little input into the development of values within their very own children. But what about the objection often heard, "But I spend 'quality' time with my children." Friends, the value of "quality" time has been greatly exaggerated. Certainly, spending quality time with your children is important. I do not wish to deny that. But one is mistaken if he or she thinks that brief periods of "quality" time compensate for the lack of "quantity" of time together. Our children need their quality time, but they also need quantity time. They need to see how we react when we're under stress. They need to see how we react when he hit our thumb with a hammer. They need to see how honest we are when the phone rings and we don't want to talk. They need to see our general attitude, disposition, and outlook on life. These things, and hundreds of others just like them, can only be gained through quantity of time spent together.

Divorce is yet another moral threat confronting our homes. Never before in our nation's history have there been so many divorces. The phrase, "till death do us part," is spoken tongue and cheek today if even retained in the marriage ceremony. Young men and women marry without a genuine lifelong commitment to each other, have children, and then selfishly decide to turn and run when life gets complicated and difficult. Left in the wake is destruction. Little children who love their Mama and Daddy are deeply hurt and emotionally scarred. What model will these children of divorce have for their own homes in the future? What example will they have concerning how to handle difficult times? A generation of children is being raised without a proper view of marriage, which will inevitably affect their view and outcome of their own future marriages.

Someone has said that divorce is a form of marital suicide, and, like all suicides, it is a permanent mistake in reaction to a temporary problem. I believe there is much wisdom in that assessment. Our nation desperately needs to be reminded of the words of Jesus, "...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder...And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication,

and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” (Matthew 19:6,9).

Another moral threat to our homes is the general lack of religious instruction our children receive. Let’s face it; we are raising and having to deal with a generation of biblically illiterate children. The Bible class, which is supposed to be a supplement to the religious instruction a child is receiving at home, has in a vast majority of cases become the sole instrument of religious instruction for that child. And to compound matters even further, much of that Bible study time is spent with scissors and crayons rather than an open Bible.

With so little religious instruction, how can we expect our children to have godly homes? The very things we want for our children in reference to the home (i.e. a marriage that will last a lifetime; a husband who will love, cherish, and sacrifice for his wife; a wife who will honor, respect, and submit to her husband) are principles contained in the Scriptures that they are not being taught.

I’m reminded of what a former Prime Minister of Great Britain said concerning the Arabs and the Jews. He said, “Why can’t the Jews and Arabs just sit down together and settle this like good Christians?” Well, isn’t the answer to that question obvious? They aren’t Christians. Why should we expect non-Christians to live by Christian standards? Likewise, why should we think a generation of biblically illiterate children would grow up and adopt Christian principles in regard to their conduct in the home?

The American family is not well today. It is suffering from several threatening infections, but it need not be fatal. There is an antidote. The antidote is a healthy dose of commitment to God’s word. When we quit attempting to doctor ourselves and place ourselves under the care of the Great Physician, we will recover.

As a nation, as a church, and as a family, we need to be reminded of the words of the Lord, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

THE WORK OF THE CHRIST

Charles C. Pugh III

Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16

No prophet preached more faithfully, more forthrightly, or with more feeling than Jeremiah.

It was Jeremiah's lot to prophesy at a time when all things in Judah were rushing down to the final and mournful catastrophe; when political excitement was at its height; when the worst passions swayed the various parties, and the most fatal counsels prevailed. It was his to stand in the way over which his nation was rushing headlong to destruction; to make an heroic effort to arrest it, and to turn it back; and to fail, and be compelled to step to one side and see his own people, whom he loved with the tenderness of a woman, plunge over the precipice into the wide, weltering ruin (Morgan, G. Campbell, Studies in the Prophecy of Jeremiah, 10).

Jeremiah began prophesying during the thirteenth year of King Josiah (627 B.C.) and continued through four other kings - Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. He witnessed the end of the monarchy, the exile into captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem.

JEREMIAH AND THE CHRIST

Although his prophecies of the Messiah are not as extensive as Isaiah's, Jeremiah did make some powerful prophetic utterances concerning the Christ. He referred to Messiah as "David their king" (30:9) and His (Messiah's) day as the days of "a new covenant" (31:31-34). Some of Jeremiah's clearest statements regarding the Messiah are discovered in the following parallel texts which serve as the basis for our study:

Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 23:5-6).

In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 33:15-16).

The above passages set forth the (1) the ORIGINATION of the Christ (2) the ADMINISTRATION of the Christ and (3) the DESIGNATION of the Christ.

THE ORIGINATION OF THE CHRIST

His origin is divine in nature. God said, "'The days are coming', says the Lord, that I will raise... a Branch ..." (verse five). Jesus affirmed, "I have come down from heaven" (John 6:38), and "I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true ... I am from Him, and He sent Me" (John 7:28-29). Furthermore, the origination of this One is humble, as well as Davidic, in nature. He came from the royal line of David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-13), and yet His background was humble and lowly. The term Branch is from the Hebrew (tsemach) which according to Smith is "never used of a twig or branch, but of that which grows directly out of the ground"

(The Promised Messiah, 345). It refers to a tender shoot which became a mighty cedar (cf. Ezek. 17:22-23). Isaiah announced this aspect of the Christ when he prophesied that, "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground" (Isa. 53:2).

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHRIST

1. His administration is a monarchy. "A King shall reign ..." (verse five). He is of the seed of David. He is a King and, thus, has a kingdom. Pilate asked, "Are you a king then?" (John 18:37). Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king" (John 18:37). He overcame and sat down with His Father on His throne (Rev. 3:21). And "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

2. His administration is successful. He "shall reign and prosper" (verse five). He shall reign "wisely" (NIV). Concerning this Branch, Isaiah stated: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might ..." (Isa. 11:2), and "of the increase of His government ... there will be no end" (Isa. 9:7).

Thus, the Messiah has both the insight and intellect to successfully accomplish God's plan for redeeming man.

3. His administration is just and righteous. He will "execute judgment and righteousness in the earth" (22:5; 33:15). Justice (ASV) and righteousness were not characteristic of the monarchical administrations with which Jeremiah was familiar (cf 22:13). Jeremiah's message involved the plea to "execute judgment (justice, ASV) and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place" (Jer. 22:3). Justice and righteousness were qualities which were essential for the nations if they were to receive divine blessings (Jer. 4:2). In Christ, we see divine justice and righteousness. Paul wrote, "... being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness ... that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26).

4. His administration brings salvation and security. "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely" (23:6; 33:16). The language implies one great act of salvation which will never have to be repeated (Smith, 346; cf. Heb 9:12; 10:10). Judah represents the saved. The Savior came out of Judah (Heb. 7:14) to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The security which is possessed by Israel in this passage (e.g. Israel shall dwell safely) is the picture of the security of the obedient believer in the Christ. Israel here is "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) which is the church of Christ (cf. Rom. 2:28-29). For those so described "there is therefore now no condemnation ... in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1) as they "do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4). This great security which is afforded the obedient believer in the Christ was announced by the Christ, Himself, when He affirmed that "My Father ... is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:29).

THE DESIGNATION OF THE CHRIST

"... Now this is His name by which He will be called; THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (23:6). The parallel text (Jer. 33:16-17) affirms "this is the name by which SHE (caps mine, CPIII) will be called." Because the title is here applied to Jerusalem, some say it also properly belongs to Israel in 23:6. However, the context strongly supports this as designating a personal Messianic title and was so interpreted by the Jews

in the Targum, Midrash, and Talmud (Smith, 347). Paul referred to the Jerusalem which is above (Gal. 4:21-31) which is a reference to the church - the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; cf. Gal. 6:16). The designation (name) given the Messiah here is that which designates the very essence of this One. He is Righteousness. He is the Righteous Branch (verse five). This designation implies (1) His deity and (2) His vicarious work.

"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness ..." (1 Cor. 1:30). Israel being "ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law" (Rom. 10:3-4). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Paul affirmed that he suffered the loss of all things that he might gain Christ "and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness ... but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Philip. 3:9). The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, because in it is revealed the righteousness of God [i.e. how God makes men righteous] (Rom 1:16-17). All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6) but, in Christ, through the merits of His blood, we are forgiven and made righteous (Eph. 1:7). The One designated by Jeremiah as "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (23:16; 33:16) is the same One of whom Isaiah prophetically spoke when he stated, "... By His knowledge My righteous servant shall justify many..." (Isa. 53:11). By a knowledge of Him (i.e. hearing, believing, and obeying the truth of the gospel, cf. Heb. 8:11-12) sinful man is made free from the guilt and consequences of his sin (unrighteousness, cf. 1 John 5: 17a; John 8:32).

CONCLUSION

We have observed how Jeremiah, some six hundred years before Jesus Christ, prophetically set forth (1) the *ORIGINATION* of the Christ, (2) the *ADMINISTRATION* of the Christ, and (3) the *DESIGNATION* of the Christ. The value of these great passages (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16) includes (1) apologetic evidence in the form of prophecy made and fulfilled, (2) assurance that the Christ is King in the Davidic line, and (3) spiritual comfort, consolation and security because of One whose righteousness enables us to "become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Hallelujah! What a Savior! As Guest has stated:

When he uttered these words, it was almost as though Jeremiah stood in the gospel age, side by side with those apostles who had

the privilege of witnessing Jesus' ascension into heaven. Squinting up into the brilliance of the cloud that received Him out of their sight, they were present at the supreme political event of the universe -- the coronation of Christ as King. When He sat down at the right hand of the Father, He was righteousness for a race of fallen humanity. Jeremiah's voice rings out, proclaiming His name to the age in which he spoke: Yahweh Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness! On this and only this vision could the prophet rest his heart and receive consolation concerning the wreckage around him. It was not the final word. ...How it must have astonished him to entertain the idea that one Person's righteousness could restore a race of humanity that had lost theirs - this person would come from the throne of David and execute judgment in such a way that He could actually become righteousness for us in a substitutionary way. Indeed God had shown him "great and mighty things" (v.3). [John Guest, The Communicator's Commentary, Jeremiah, Lamentations, 170, 239].

TRUE REPENTANCE

Randy Cook

TEXT: Jeremiah 26:13

THESIS: To convince my hearers that repentance is necessary because all sin.

INTRODUCTION

As long as sin has been in the world, God has desired that men repent. In fact, it far surpasses a desire to the point of commandment. In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, God's people had forsaken Him time and time again. Even after repeated warnings, the people refused to turn back to God. "Now, therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; then the Lord will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you" (Jer. 26:13). What God demanded of them was the same thing needed in the lives of all today, true biblical repentance.

It will be the goal of this lesson to describe what true repentance is, what fruit it produces, and consider some of the Scriptures where God demands repentance. The idea that some may have, that repentance is just the quitting of a sin, is wrong. The Bible shows that there is much more involved in repentance.

WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT

It is often the case that in trying to understand a word or concept, it is advantageous to describe what the word does not mean. Repentance is not the guilty feeling that one may get when he gets caught red-handed in a sin. He may then be careful for awhile so as not to get caught again, but without true repentance, he may soon fall into the same sinful practices again.

Repentance is also not just being sorry for committing a sin. Sorrow without godly sorrow does not lead to true repentance. One may be sorry over the results of his sin. For example, the drunk may be sorrowful when he wakes up with a terrible headache and no money in his pocket after a night of carousing. He may be sorry for the grief he caused when

he struck an innocent family with his car. But, that is not godly sorrow. Sorrow alone is not enough.

Repentance is not just quitting a sin, or covering up a sin, pretending it never happened. Repentance is not just starting over. It can be seen that repentance is not a number of things that some people think it is. Does the Bible give us any help in understanding what true repentance really is?

BIBLICAL VIEW OF REPENTANCE

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, exposing their sins and giving them instructions on how to correct them. When he heard that they accepted the correction, he rejoiced, knowing that godly sorrow had led them to repent.

“For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: what diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (2 Cor. 7:8-11).

The Corinthians had come to realize that their sins were against God, and they truly were sorry. That godly sorrow had led them not only to change their mind, but their actions as well.

When Paul stood before King Agrippa, giving his defense, he told of his mission to go to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance (Acts 26:20). Repentance includes a stoppage of sin, a turning toward God, and then leads to a changed life.

Peter told the Jews in Acts 3:19 to “repent therefore and be converted,” thus showing that repentance is not just a changed life. It is the godly sorrow that produces the repentance that leads to that changed life. Repentance, then, may be described as that change of mind which was

brought about by godly sorrow, and that change of mind led to a change of life.

What is involved, then, in producing godly sorrow in a person's heart? One may look at the account when the prophet Nathan rebuked King David in 2 Sam. 12:7-12.

Nathan *first* spoke of the graciousness and the love of God: "Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! Thus says the God of Israel, "I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives unto your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!"' " (2 Sam. 12:7-8). In appealing with people today, the love of God should be the basis of the message to get people to repent.

Secondly, Nathan revealed the sin of David. "Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; and you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon" (2 Sam. 12:9). In making a call to repent, the sin must be made known. Peter told the Jews on the Day of Pentecost that they were guilty of crucifying Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36). He then told them to repent and be baptized to find the remedy for sin (Acts 2:38).

Nathan's *third* step in leading David to repent was to tell of the consequences of his sins. David's house would be plagued with adversity and all Israel would know it (2 Sam. 12:10-12). People must come to know that there is a coming judgment, and if sins are not forgiven, eternal punishment can be expected. There are also consequences that are more immediate and temporary. Sins can keep one out of heaven, but they can also make one's life miserable here and now.

FRUITS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

When one truly repents, there can be seen a complete change in his life. His actions are different. His speech is changed. His thoughts are now directed toward God. Paul listed some of those changes which came into the lives of the Corinthians when they truly repented. "For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Cor. 7:11).

They became diligent in trying to be faithful to God. They made a constant, careful, concerted effort to live right. They now took their Christianity very seriously. Peter wrote concerning diligence, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith..." (2 Pet. 1:5). After giving the instruction to give all diligence, He then said to be "...even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble" (2 Pet. 1:11). When one repents, there will be a desire to very carefully live according to the Scriptures.

When the Corinthians, as Christians, repented and sought God's forgiveness, but they cleared themselves. Not only had they sought God's forgiveness, they also desired Paul's forgiveness. The Corinthians wanted to be clear of the matter. They longed for the slate to be wiped clean, to start afresh. Paul was overjoyed that they desired to clear themselves of any blame. When one is willing to repent and seek God's forgiveness, then there should also be that diligent desire to have his name cleared of any guilt.

When one repents of sin, there is also evident in one's life an indignation, or a sort of anger. The Corinthians should have been angry at themselves for tolerating the sin as long as they did. One may be angry at the sin, or at himself for getting involved in the sin to begin with. He may be angry because that same sin is having an adverse effect on others. He may become more acutely aware of that particular sin or the temptation. When he sees the sin taking its toll on others, his anger is kindled toward that sin. This righteous indignation must be directed toward the sin and not the sinner.

Fear is also one of the fruits of true repentance. One may fear because he is afraid that he may slip, stumble, or fall into the same temptation. When one fears, he posts a mental guard on his life, watching carefully to avoid the snares of the Devil. The fear may also be because of the impending judgment by God if he does not repent. When one loses that fear, he lets down his guard, and sets himself up for a fall. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:13).

The Corinthians had a "vehement desire" as a result of their repentance. They had a fervent wish – but for what? It would probably be correct in saying that their fervent wish was to be right in the eyes of God. They could have also wished to see Paul, now that they had corrected the sins he had previously pointed out to them. All too often people have burning desires, but for the wrong things. When one has a burning desire for God, he will be hungering and thirsting for

righteousness (Matt. 5:6). He will not be just “lukewarm” in his service to God (Rev. 3:15-16).

Zeal is also listed as a fruit in the life of one who has truly repented. Zeal is the eagerness and the tremendous interest shown when pursuing a goal. When the goal is heaven, then the zeal is the eagerness to turn from all sin and very eagerly follow after God and His word. The city of Corinth was known for its gross immorality, and that type of sin had crept into the church. Now the church had repented, and wanted to be known as truly moral. They had the zeal to have a corrected character before God and a corrected reputation among the people.

Paul stated that “vindication” was a fruit of the Corinthians’ repentance. The KJV translates it as “revenge.” They had a readiness and a willingness to see that justice was done. They really wanted to do what was right. They knew that sin ought to be punished, and they were ready to see that happen. Those who were guilty in leading them astray needed to be dealt with.

It can be clearly seen that true repentance produces fruit in the penitent person’s life. A change of attitude, a change of action, and a change of aspiration will be evident in the life of one who truly repents.

GOD DEMANDS REPENTANCE BY ALL

Repentance is not optional if one desires to please God. God has required that all people repent. Jesus sent His apostles to preach repentance: “and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46). Jesus also gave this ultimatum to those who challenged Him, “...but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Peter wrote of God’s longsuffering, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

When Paul’s sermon on Mar’s Hill in Athens was coming to a conclusion, he called on the people to repent: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). The very next verse gave the reason for this command: there is going to be a Day of Judgment! All will have to stand before God to give an account of how they have lived (2 Cor. 5:10), and whether one has repented or not will be a very vital issue on that day.

CONCLUSION

Jeremiah's call to repentance to the people of his day is the same message that is needed today. People must amend their ways. Lifestyles must change. Sin must stop. Man's ways need to be corrected. The call to "obey the voice of the Lord your God" is needed in the 21st Century as much as it was in Jeremiah's time. Today's pulpit must sound out the command to repent. Eldershops must stand strong on God's demands for repentance. Sinners must clearly understand the role of repentance when considering their souls' salvation. Christians who have turned their backs on God must wake up, as the prodigal son "came to himself," and return to the Father who loves them and wants to give them their heavenly inheritance.

THE PROPHETS OF OLD AND PREACHERS OF TODAY

James E. Farley

I am, more and more, of the opinion that people today do not understand properly the work of the gospel preacher because they have failed to understand the work of the prophets of the Old Testament times. It is even true that many who are currently working with congregations as evangelists have failed to see the parallel and are, therefore, not being as effective in the most important work on earth today as they can and should be. It will be my task here to compare the prophet of old with the evangelist of today.

THERE ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH THEY ARE NOT ALIKE

Of course, there are ways in which the prophets of the Old Testament and modern-day evangelists are different. The prophets of the Old Testament (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Elijah, Elisha, etc.) were inspired men. They "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21). The idea behind the word *pheromenoi* (translated "moved") is "to be borne along as a sailing vessel before the wind." (A COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES OF PETER, JOHN, AND JUDE, by Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, TN, 1991).

We are not living during a time of miracles and current revelation from God. We have the verbally inspired Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17), given by divine revelation or inspiration, and confirmed by the manifold miracles performed by the apostles and those upon whom apostles had laid their hands. (John 14:26; John 16:13; Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Ephesians 3:3-5; Mark 16:15-20; Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 8:17-18).

The prophets of the Old Testament and those of the early days of the New Testament church of Christ had miraculous abilities bestowed upon them from God through the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word for prophet is *navee*, and literally means, "to boil up as a fountain" or "one who boils over." Robert Milligan, in his classic *SCHEME OF REDEMPTION*, says they "seemed to pour out their inspired utterances, as a fountain pours out its waters." We, of course, do not have such powers today.

The prophets of the Old Testament and those of the early days of the New Testament church of Christ, were often foretellers as well as forth-tellers, and in this way also we are unlike them. They had this ability to

see into the future given to them by God. Isaiah saw Cyrus, the King of Persia, more than 150 years prior to his birth! (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). Josiah and his work were foretold 300 years in advance! (I Kings 13:2; 2 Kings 23:15, 16). Daniel foretold the rise and fall of the nations from Babylon to Rome and prophesied about the kingdom of God that would never fall! (Daniel 2, 7). There are over 800 predictive prophecies in the Old Testament, and more than 300 of these are fulfilled in the person of Jesus the Christ! In the New Testament we read of prophets like Agabus, who had this God-given ability. (Acts 11:28; Acts 21:10-11).

However, the prophets of the Old Testament had messages that were not complete in and of themselves. The prophecy of old came "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Hebrews 1:1 KW). The ASV has it, "...by diverse portions and in divers manners ..." God's overall scheme of redemption was seemingly portioned out gradually to them in fragments. Sometimes it came by means of visions, by dreams, by symbols, and even through audible voices. The Old Testament prophets did not fully comprehend all of the significance of what they were prophesying either. (I Peter 1:9-12; Ephesians 3:3-5). Their message looked forward to the coming of "THE PROPHET" (Cf. Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; Acts 3:22-23; Acts 7:37).

But there are ways in which preachers of today are like the prophets of old.

HOLY MEN OF GOD

The prophets of old were "holy men of God." (2 Peter 1:20-21). Men who proclaim the message of Jesus Christ today are to be holy men of God also. To be holy is simply to be a sanctified person ... one set apart for a purpose. All Christians must be holy. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (I Peter 1:15). "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14). The Hebrew writer referred to members of the church as "holy brethren" (Hebrews 3:1). We are to be holy! We are saints of God! (I Corinthians 1:2).

Preachers must be holy as men of God. The phrase "man of God" is used in the Old Testament many times to refer to such men as the prophets. (Deuteronomy 33:1; 1 Samuel 2:27; 9:7-10; I Kings 13:1-9; 2 Chronicles 8:14; etc.). In the New Testament we read Paul's letters to the young preacher Timothy and see how he referred to him as "man of God." (1 Timothy 6:11; Cf. also 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Years ago, brother Fred Dennis wrote, "I am sure there are many who are preaching who should not be. On the other hand, no doubt, there are many who are not preaching who should be ... We are to practice what we preach and preach what we practice. No doubt there are some who ought to stop preaching until their practice catches up with their preaching!" (FIFTY SHORT SERMONS: Volume One, Fred Dennis, Bible Herald Book Store, Parkersburg, WV, 1942, p 11).

Preachers must be men who have submitted to the righteousness of God and who have a dedicated desire to be used in the service of the King ...Holy men of God.

LIKE THE PROPHETS OF OLD, OUR EMPHASIS MUST BE ON THE MESSAGE RATHER THAN THE MESSENGER

The prophets of old often said, "Thus saith the Lord ..." The emphasis was not upon the prophet. They were not men who desired to be set upon a pedestal and admired as great orators or teachers. No doubt many of them were great orators and teachers, but this was not their emphasis. Their work was to get people to live for God. Their message was basically "Repent or perish." (Compare 1 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 1:16-20; Jeremiah 6:9-17; Ezekiel 3:15-21; Hosea 4:1-19; etc.) Their work can be summarized in the words of 2 Kings 17:13, "Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets." This is certainly a large part of the work of modern-day evangelists. We are to sound out warnings of danger, for souls are at stake. It is urgent. (Read Ezekiel 3:17-21 and compare it with Acts 18:6 and Acts 20:26-27, 31). Love is not blind to danger, and love for souls demands that we warn people of the coming Judgement Day! (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

The prophets of old were not always successful in getting the people to turn from their rebellious and evil ways. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." (Ezekiel 33:31 -32). Many would come just because they liked to hear the preacher preach, but they would not do what the preacher

said to do. It has not changed much, has it? William M. Willimon stated the problem clearly when he wrote about why people do not like expository style sermons anymore, but would rather hear quartets, or see dramas, etc. He said, "People want to be entertained rather than converted." He hit the nail right on the head! Back in the early 1980's I had the pleasure of hearing the faithful Franklin Camp preach at Christiansburg, Virginia. In his sermon that day he said, "Much of what we see in religion today is nothing more than a religious Grand Ol' Opry!"

Today, we must emphasize the message from our King Jesus. One of the words translated "preach" is the Greek word *kerusso*. Thayer says of it, "...to be a herald; to officiate as a herald; to proclaim after the manner of a herald; always with the suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed." The herald of old time would stand on the street and read the decree from the King, and everyone was expected to pay heed to what was read.

One who preaches is to have a note of certainty... a note of authority ... because if he is preaching the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-4), he is proclaiming not his own message but the message of King Jesus. The message from the King must be listened to. Like the prophets of old we must stand boldly and proclaim this message, and not ourselves, even when some will not listen ... Remember, we are to preach "in season, out of season ..." That is, when they accept it and when they don't ... when it is popular and when it is not; accepting every opportunity to preach the Word.

IN PREACHING THE MESSAGE FROM THE KING
WE EMPLOY THE SAME BASIC METHOD AS THE PROPHETS OF OLD

In preaching this message we are to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:1-4). This is basically the same as those of old time. They reprovved and rebuked the people for their unfaithfulness, and we must do the same. In doing the "work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5), we are to "reprove." This is from the Greek word, *elegxon*, and carries the meaning, "to correct in the sense of refuting." There are some things we must speak out against as we preach the Truth. The word "reprove" is from *epitimeson*, and means that one is to stress "serious warning to prevent an action." The word "exhort" is the word *parakaleson* and means "to appeal to." This is gentler than the first two words. These definitions are from the pen of Earl Edwards in his excellent article, "The Preacher As A Man Of The Word," contained in the book, *MAN OF GOD: Essays on the Life and Work*

of the Preacher, edited by Shawn D. Mathis. Concerning "longsuffering" or "patience" (*makrothumia*), brother Edwards quotes Marvin R. Vincent's *WORD STUDIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT*; "... long-suffering is to be maintained against the temptations to anger presented by the obstinacy and perverseness of certain hearers; and such are to be met, not merely with rebuke, but also with sound and reasonable instruction in the truth."

Certainly, the prophets of Old were men who had to have great faith and patience in the face of obstinate and rebellious hearers who cried out, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits ..." (Isaiah 30:10) Compare 2 Timothy 4:1-4. It is not much different today. People want to hear that which "tickles their ears" and not the "unpleasantness" of such words as "Repent!" Or what about those who said, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14). Even today there are smooth talkers who will deceive the hearts of the innocent. (Romans 16:17-18). When the man of God demanded that they "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls ...", they cried out, "We will not walk therein." Does this sound like some of what is happening even today? I once heard the gospel preacher, David Meek, say, "Some folks have 'Billy Goat' religion. They'll say, 'I know what the Bible ... BUT ...'"

Ezekiel was told to go to a hardheaded and hardhearted people and to take the Word of the Lord with him. He was to speak it to them "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." God told him that their heads were hard, but that He had made Ezekiel's head "harder than flint" so he was not to fear them, nor to be dismayed by their looks. (Ezekiel 3). We must read and study men like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, for their trials in proclaiming the Word of the Lord are ours.

**OUR WORK, LIKE THOSE OF OLD TIME,
IS NOT ALWAYS A POPULAR WORK**

A perfect example of this truth is found in the record of the life of Elijah. In 1 Kings 17 he prophesied against the wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. As a result of his boldness to speak the word of the Lord he had to go into hiding. Enough time went by so that God told him, "Go, shew thyself to Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. (1 Kings 18:1). When Ahab saw faithful Elijah, he said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17).

This is the way it has always been. When those who are faithful stand up for what is right, the wicked will do all they can to destroy them. However, we must contend with them. The Word says, "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them." (Proverbs 28:4; Compare 1 Timothy 6:12 and Jude 3).

The real troublemakers, of course, are those who attempt to forsake the law and to get others to follow after their perverted ways. (Galatians 1:6-11). Elijah answered Ahab, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." (I Kings 18:18). It was then that this man of God challenged the people by asking, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal then follow him." (I Kings 18:21). What is sad is that "... the people answered him not a word."

He then showed courage enough to challenge the false prophets of Baal to contest to see whose God was real. (I Kings 18:22-40). Here is an example of one man's standing up for what is right and leading an entire nation back to righteousness!

John the Baptist is another that serves well for us here. He was courageous enough to look Herod in the eye and tell him straightforwardly, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." (Mark 6:18). This was not a popular thing to do, and John was ultimately arrested and killed for it! But there was no indecision nor evasiveness in his declaration against that adulterous union. God's Truth was not compromised! Oh for more men like John the Baptist in the world today; in the church today!

I would like to add some quotes here from two brothers who have now gone on to their reward, but whose words still ring as true as ever. Dillard Thurman wrote, "There is nothing indirect, indecisive, indefinite, evasive or impersonal about the Word of God. It is fitted to the need of the sinful man, and must be so declared. Every Bible illustration of God approved proclamations underlines this truth. As God has spoken plainly and openly, so His servants must shun evasions, duplicity, and half-truths. God has need of preachers who will openly condemn sin; not preachers who are policy-men, courting public favor and plaudits. An Old Testament prophet received a directive that is always applicable to the preacher of God's Word: 'The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell it as a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.' (Jeremiah 23:28)." Brother Thurman then wrote of some Old

Testament examples. "When Nathan stood before David, his message was neither evasive nor impersonal. After having staged the scene of David's sin, Nathan pointedly asserted, 'Thou art the man.' There could be no misunderstanding as to who had sinned, who was guilty, who must repent, and who would pay the penalty. David's only answer was given, 'I have sinned.' We need that kind of direct preaching, and the same results today! ... Friend, when you hear a preacher fearlessly proclaiming the whole counsel of God, don't begin criticizing. He is trying to save your soul, and is going about it in the only way God has ever ordained. And when you hear another kind of preaching, turn back and study 2 John 9-11 very carefully and prayerfully. Then act as you think God calls on you to act!" (*GOSPEL MINUTES*, Vol. 18, No.24, June 13, 1969).

Another quote comes from the pen of Roy H. Lanier, Sr. Brother Lanier wrote about the need for uncompromising preaching. "There are times and circumstances when the preacher has to pay a high price for preaching all the truth. Paul paid a high price to preach that Gentiles could be members of the Lord's body, the family of God, without being circumcised and keeping the law of Moses. Divorce and remarriage for trivial reasons is becoming so common in our churches today, even among church leaders, that preachers run the risk of being fired for preaching the truth on the subject. And some preachers are compromising with the world, either by not preaching on the subject at all, or by being more liberal in their teaching than Jesus was on this subject. Paul warned that the time would come when people would not endure sound doctrine and would take to themselves teachers after their own lusts; their ears would be turned away from truth to accept fables, error. (2 Timothy 4:2-4). If the tide is not turned soon, men who teach what Jesus and Paul taught on this subject will have to work with their own hands at some trade to care for their families. It is easy enough to preach baptism for the remission of sins; the brethren most everywhere demand it. But to preach against social drinking, putting pleasure before worship, public swimming practically in the nude, living in adultery because of unscriptural marriage unions, requires courage, dedication, commitment which Paul expressed when he said, 'Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.' (1 Corinthians 9:16)." ("Preaching The Word Of God's Grace" *GOSPEL ADVOCATE*, May 17, 1979, p.310).

When trials come upon us for standing up for what is right, we must "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:12).

PSYCHIC DETECTIVES

Winford Claiborne

Many of the cable television stations for years have been advertising the services of psychics. The stations are giving publicity to these frauds and fakes so the stations can make money. Do the station owners and managers care nothing about the damage they do to the lives of those who patronize these deceivers? Psychics have no supernatural knowledge of the situations they describe. They are good guessers and know how to deceive people into believing they have a direct pipeline into the mysteries of the universe. They know they are misleading people, but care more for the money they make than for the welfare of their constituents.

Approximately three years ago a young wife and mother disappeared from her home in Nashville, Tennessee. The Nashville police, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement agencies have worked diligently to find the young woman. Apparently all the news agencies and the various investigative agencies are convinced that she is dead. Many Nashvillians are convinced that her husband had something to do with her disappearance, but no one has been able to prove that. I have difficulty believing that young mother would stay away from her children and from her parents -if she were alive.

During the week of May 3, 1999, one of the reporters on WSMV, Channel 4, in Nashville, interviewed a so-called "psychic detective." I listened carefully to all of the interviews. I am thoroughly disgusted that anyone of reasonable intelligence would consult such pagan sources for any reason. The heathen psychic asserted that the young woman was violently pushed down a flight of stairs in her home. She said the police would discover clues of the woman's death on the staircase. The police foolishly investigated and found nothing. Are the Nashville police so incompetent that they overlooked such obvious clues in the woman's house? If they are that incompetent, they need to fire some detectives and hire some new ones.

I am absolutely amazed that any intelligent, educated person would pay any attention to a psychic - whether a detective or otherwise. I cannot say this too emphatically: The woman psychic knows nothing - absolutely nothing - about the disappearance of the Nashville woman. She is taking the news media, the police department, and others on a

goose chase. I know the Nashville police are desperate to locate the missing woman and to find her killer - if she is dead - but no one should behave so stupidly as to consult a psychic. Police officers who have little enough good sense to listen to a psychic have no business being policemen. Police chiefs and detective supervisors who allow it to happen are disqualified to hold their positions. I am embarrassed and ashamed that such foolishness and heathenism could occur in my home state or elsewhere. Consulting psychics, witches, fortune tellers, diviners and trance mediums is abomination in the sight of almighty God.

So why would a great television station like WSMV hire a woman who claims to be a psychic detective? Could it be that Channel 4 has such a strong desire to boost their ratings? The Tennessean (Monday, May 24, 1999) hints that this was the case. The Tennessean quotes one of their media judges as saying, "That was one of the most reprehensible things I've seen on local TV news in the last five years." She wondered if the TV station was hard up for news (p. 4-A). The Tennessean contacted the psychic detective who claims she has a 90% success rate in helping the police. The station paid the fraud \$320 per day, plus expenses. If she is so successful in finding bodies and in solving crimes, let us just fire the detectives in our various police departments and hire psychics.

I do not like to accuse anyone of lying, but the woman psychic has not been successful in 90% of the cases she has been called in to solve. She has not been successful in one. If she had, she would have furnished documentation of her success. She may have guessed correctly in one or two cases, but her so-called "psychic abilities" have not helped her in solving one case - not one. Don Aaron, spokesman for the Nashville Police Department, admitted that the psychic's information had not helped, but the police were not going to be closed-minded enough not to follow up on any potential lead" (p. 4-A). If you will pardon a technical term: That is pure folderol. If I were a police spokesman, I would have been embarrassed at that statement.

Simon Hogart is an award-winning journalist who has been writing about the so-called "paranormal" for fifteen years. Mike Hutchinson has been collecting books, magazine articles and other information on the paranormal for twenty years. These two men joined forces in writing a book with the title, Bizarre Beliefs (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1995). Their book includes chapters on UFOs, Alien Abductions, Astrology, Fire Walking, Dowsing, and such like. One whole chapter is devoted to "Psychic Detectives" (pp. 101-109). These authors insist that it is "almost certainly true that no psychic has ever given the police

information which has led to a missing person - or their body - being found, or to a crime being prevented, or a criminal arrested" (p. 101).

Hogart and Hutchinson raise one point which needs to be pursued further. If psychics have supernatural ability - which they believe they do - why do they not use all their time to prevent crimes? If they have information about a lost person or a crime, surely they know what person is going to commit a crime. Could they not do the human family a great service if they informed the police about a crime before it is committed? If their talent comes from God almighty, as most psychics claim, surely they can use it for preventive purposes. Could psychics have seen the recent tragedy at Littleton, Colorado? If they cannot predict such events, their abilities are of little value. If they know and do not tell someone, they are hardhearted and irresponsible. They do not know because they cannot know.

Many of you in my audience probably remember the murders of young black men in Atlanta. Twenty-six young black men were killed. The Sunday Mirror, an English newspaper, notified the Atlanta police of a well known English psychic, Frances Dymond. According to Hogart and Hutchinson, the psychic affirmed that the young men were being killed by a team of racists, the leader of which was an older man who worked with Black children in a park-like surrounding in Atlanta. Oddly enough, the Atlanta police said they would take notice of the psychic's information. When Wayne Williams was arrested and charged by the police with the murder of the young men, the killing ceased immediately (p. 102). And yet people have so little reasoning, they think psychics have some ability from beyond this world to provide information. I do not want to be misunderstood, so let me say very plainly: They are all frauds.

The Yorkshire Ripper was a "notorious British mass murderer." The British police spent six years trying to find the vicious criminal. In addition, the manhunt cost the government between \$3,000,000 and \$10,000,000. One of England's better known detective psychics is Nella Jones. An article in The News of the World said that when the police could not solve a crime, they called on Nella Jones. The truth is, Mrs. Jones did not know anything about the Yorkshire Ripper. In fact, every psychic in England missed the identity of the Yorkshire Ripper. If they are tied in to the supernatural realm, how do they explain their misses? They cover them up and act as if they have provided valuable information.

Some of you may know the name James Randi - a magician - whose stage name is The Great Randi. He has exposed fakes and frauds of all kinds - including Peter Popoff, the infamous charismatic healer. James Randi contacted Scotland Yard - one of the most famous police units in the world - and asked if psychics had ever been of any service in solving crimes. Hogart and Hutchinson quote Scotland Yard as telling Randi: "We never go out of our way to seek psychic help, and no psychic has ever cleared up a single case for us." The Los Angeles Police Department conducted tests to ascertain if psychics could be any assistance in solving crimes. The LAPD reached this conclusion: "The data provided no support for the belief that the identified 'sensitives' could produce investigatively useful information. Additionally, the data also failed to show that the psychics could produce any information relating to the cases beyond a chance level of expectancy" (pp. 108-109).

Hogart and Hutchinson provide a chart outlining the various ways five psychics pictured the infamous Yorkshire Ripper. His name was either Johnnie or Ronnie, Cecil or Cyril. His name was actually Peter Sutcliffe. They thought his age was between 31 and 45. He was thirty-two years old. Doris Stokes said his hair was mousy/dark and covered his ears. A right parting covered a bald patch. Kay Rhea said his hair was straight and dark. The psychics said he lived either at Tyneside or Wearside. His address includes Berwick or Bewick. He lives with his sister and family. He actually lived in a 4-bedroom detached house in Heaton, Bradford. These are just a few of the misses the psychics made (pp. 108-109). With that kind of information the police should have caught the culprit in a day or two. How inexcuseably ridiculous to appeal to any form of divination! A policeman would do just as well to consult his child's teddy bear.

What does the Bible say about consulting such pagan sources? The Bible leaves absolutely no doubt about the seriousness of the sin of approaching fortune tellers, diviners, and such like. I have time to give you just a few examples. As the Israelites were preparing to cross the Jordan River and enter the land God had promised to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, God himself gave the following instructions: "When you are come into the land, which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations." What were those abominations which were prevalent among the heathen nations? "There shall not be found among you any one who makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer" (Dt. 18:9-11). What

would happen to the Israelites if they did consult these pagan sources of information? God could not make his prohibitions any plainer. "For all who do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be perfect with the Lord your God. For these nations, which you shall possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so" (Dt. 18:12-14).

All of the pagan practices outlined in Deuteronomy 18 are supposed to predict the future or to control the future. One might understand why those who did not know God or who had rejected his will would appeal to divination, soothsaying, magic and such like, but how could the people of God do so? How could king Saul consult the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:8-14). What is especially troubling is for those who call themselves Christians to go to fortune tellers, psychics and channelers. My father used to say: If these people have any knowledge of the unknown, they have received it from Satan. The truth is, they have no such knowledge. They are deceivers of the worst sort. Their deceptions are very destructive in the long run.

As I was preparing this transcript, I listened to Katherine Crier on one of the Fox channels. She had a young man on her program who claimed to be a psychic. Katherine is a former judge and a very intelligent person. I cannot understand why she would have a psychic on "The Crier Report" and why she did not show how utterly foolish, unscientific, and unreasonable psychics are. He appeared to know the background and the interests of the people who called the program, but he is a fake and a fraud, as are all psychics. Why do television and radio stations give any publicity to these frauds?

If the psychics know so much about the future, why do they not get rich by gambling, except in their case, it would not be gambling. If a man knows which horse is going to win, he is not gambling when he places money on that horse. Psychics should be able to know the number which would win the lottery. They would not have to guess or put their money on the wrong number. They would know. Do you know what psychics and similar deceivers say in response to what I have said about gambling. They say they do not use their God-given talent to make money. That would be using their ability for selfish reasons. Anyone who believes that will believe just about anything. If they are not interested in money, why do the psychic detectives charge so much for their services? The so-called "psychic detective" who came to Nashville

charged WSMV \$320 per day plus expenses. That means she made \$1280 in just four days. That is not bad pay for four days, especially for someone who knows nothing and can produce nothing. Some of our doctors and other professionals do not make that kind of money.

My friends, nobody can know the future, and nobody can control the future. We do not need to know what the future will bring. What we do need to know is what God demands of us. You do not have to consult a psychic or a fortune teller to learn that. Bible believers have been blessed with sure knowledge - knowledge which will get us successfully through this life and give us the assurance of life eternal. The apostle Paul explains: "But continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; and that from a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, completely furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

I believe one of the reasons many in our nation appeal to the heathen sources I have mentioned today is their ignorance of God's will or their rebellion against it. No Christian could ever consult those sources which God has so strongly condemned. But even if the Bible had not spoken so plainly against these deceivers, we ought to be able by our own good judgment to avoid them. When they make predictions which do not come to pass or when they give false information, we ought to know they are reliable. Yet thousands of Americans continue to pay attention to false prophets, such as, the late Jeane Dixon, Edgar Cayce, and others. And both Dixon and Cayce claimed to be Christians.

God's word and God's word alone tells us what God expects of us and what our final destiny will be. I urge you to study the word diligently and to obey it implicitly. The word of God commands us to believe in Jesus Christ - not in some psychic or New Age guru. It also commands us to repent of our alien sins and to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. When we have obeyed the gospel, we are to worship our Lord every Lord's day, work for the conversion of our acquaintances and others, grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and help those who are in need. You do not need a psychic to provide guidance in these matters. The Bible is sufficient for Christian living.

May our God help us to avoid heathenism, paganism and superstition and rely on the inspired word of God. May he also help us to be informed about these destructive practices and to speak out against them. Our nation cannot afford to pay any attention to these fakes and frauds.

BIOGRAPHIES

Keith G. Ball

Keith Ball was born in Fairmont, West Virginia, in 1958. He attended Ohio Valley College in Parkersburg, WV and the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, TN.

He is married to the former Brenda Cole, and they have two children: Rachel and Joshua.

Keith has been preaching on a full-time basis since August 8, 1982. He has served as the minister for the Fairlea Church of Christ in Fairlea, WV, the Beallsville Church of Christ, in Beallsville, OH, and presently serves as the minister for the Delaware Church of Christ in Delaware, OH.

He has been involved in mission work in India since 1985 and has made six month-long trips there in those years. He has spoken at various lectureships in WV and OH. He has been involved with Christian Youth Camps for many years and has taught church history at the West Virginia School of Preaching for the past four years.



John M. Brown

Johnny Mack Brown is a native of the Ashland, Kentucky, area. He has been preaching since 1984, after receiving his B.A. in history and Bible from Harding University. He has preached full-time at the Little Beaver Creek church of Christ (Pike County, KY), 1984-88; Stanton church of Christ (Stanton, KY), 1988-91; and Flatwoods church of Christ (Flatwoods, KY), 1991-present. He has preached extensively on the radio, and since 1993 has conducted a weekly television program entitled "Searching the Scriptures" over WTSF channel 63, Ashland, KY.



He has written for several gospel papers, conducts 10-12 Gospel Meetings per year, and co-edits a quarterly paper, Bible Bulwarks. He has three children, Sarah, Samuel, and Shyler.

Winford Claiborne

Winford Claiborne was born in Portland, Tennessee. He began preaching by appointment in 1943 and has since worked with congregations in Michigan, Kentucky, Georgia, and Tennessee. He is presently located with the West Fayetteville Church of Christ in Fayetteville, TN. He has studied at many schools and is a graduate of Murray State University with a B.A. degree in English and an M.A. in education. He also was awarded an Honorary Doctorate (LL.D.) by Freed-Hardeman University.



He has taught school at Benton High School, Benton, KY.; Georgia Christian School, Valdosta, GA.; Florida College; Alabama Christian School of Religion; and at Freed-Hardeman University, where he taught Bible for fourteen years. He has also served as President of Georgia Christian School. While at Freed-Hardeman University, he served as the director of the lectureship eleven years and edited eleven lectureship books.

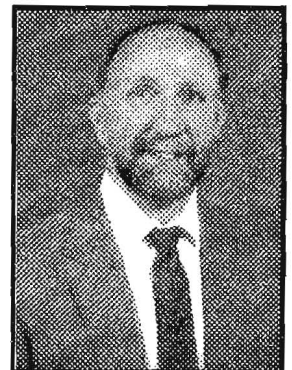
He and his wife, Mary Lou (Molly) were married in 1949 and have two sons Doran, and Daniel. They also have three grandchildren, Wesley Brooks, Hannay Katherine, and Mark.

Over the past forty-five years, he has had a special interest in flying.

He began speaking on the International Gospel Hour in 1995. This radio broadcast is now on about 165 stations across the United States.

Randy Cook

Randy Cook was born in Fairmont, West Virginia, January 23, 1955. He graduated from Farmington High school in 1973. He began preaching in 1979 on a part-time basis for area congregations. He worked as interim minister for the Barrackville Church of Christ in 1981 before attending the East Tennessee School of Preaching. He graduated from ETSP in 1983.

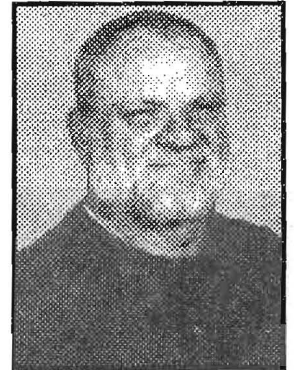


He served as minister for the Oakland Church of Christ in Oakland, Maryland, for ten years. He has been at the Oakhurst Church of Christ in Farmington, WV, for the past 7 years. He has made two mission trips to India. He has worked at West Virginia Christian Youth Camp for the past 22 years and has co-directed Junior Week for 8 years.

Randy is married to the former Beth Driver from Elyria, Ohio. They have two sons: Matthew, 19, and James, who is 14.

Nicholas Deiger

Nicholas Deiger was born in Canfield, Ohio on October 11, 1941, to Charles and Mildred Deiger. He attended Struthers Church of Christ and was baptized there April 18, 1954 by H.W. Bankes, and attended there until 1960. He attended Beaver Street Church of Christ in Lisbon, Ohio from 1960 until 1970. He graduated from Canfield High School in 1960 and was in Farm Equipment Business from 1960 to 1969.



Nick served two years in the U.S. Army, 1964 to 1966. He moved to Memphis Tennessee January 27, 1970 and attended the Memphis School of Preaching, graduating July 2, 1970, and finishing his studies January 1972. He moved to Sandyville, West Virginia and worked with the congregation there from February 1972 until October 24, 1979. He moved to Pumpkin Center October 25, 1979 and is still working with them.

Nick married Ruth Graham November 5, 1966 and they have two children, Nancy Lou, who died as a result of a car accident July 31, 1995, and Nicholas Howard, who married Nancy Louise Conaway September 4, 1999.

He has been active in Christian Youth Camp work since 1967. Presently, he serves as President of the board of directors of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp. He also has worked with Pleasant Acres Christian Haven as worship service coordinator since 1980.

Albert E. Farley

Albert Farley was born at Crum, WV April 26, 1942, the son of William H. and Clista Spaulding Farley and was raised at Longacre, WV. He graduated from Montgomery High School in 1960 and served four years in the U.S. Navy. He attended Ohio Valley College 1964-66 where he met and married Nancy Ann Brewer. They have four children: Scott, Clista (Heintzman), Rebecca (Ragle), and Elisabeth; and four grandchildren: Bethany and Darren Heintzman, and Aaron and Andrew Ragle.



Albert preached his first sermon in 1964 at Red Bush, OH. He began full-time preaching in 1966 at Belington, WV. He has worked with congregations in WV at Chesapeake, Weston, Crum, Webster Springs, and Salem, where he has lived since 1982.

He is a graduate of Glenville State College, with a BA in Elementary Education, and taught the fifth grade at Crum. He spoke five days each week on the "Gospel Minutes" radio program on WHAW, Weston, 1972-76 and on the "Bible Study Program" 1980-82. He has edited *WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN* since 1993.

James E. Farley

James Farley currently preaches for the Main St. Church of Christ in Pikeville, Kentucky, where he has worked since November 1997. He is a native of Fayette County, WV.

He is married to the former Linda M. Talbott and they have two children, Timothy and Jennifer.

Jim began preaching while stationed with the U.S. Army in Germany. He attended the Frankfurt School of Preaching and preached weekly for small military congregations. Upon returning to the U.S. and being honorably discharged from the Army, he enrolled at Freed-Hardeman College. While a student at Freed-Hardeman he preached full-time at Clifton, TN.

Following graduation, Jim has served congregations of the Lord's church in Tennessee, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. He holds several gospel meetings each year.

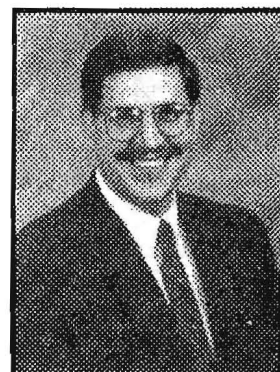


Steve Higginbotham

Steve Higginbotham was born in Weirton, WV and raised in Chester, WV where his mother and father still live. He is a graduate of Oak Glen High School. He graduated from Freed-Hardeman University in 1984. He met his wife, Kim (Pierce) while at FHU. They have four children: Kelli (12), Michael (7), Matthew (2), and Anne Marie (5 months).

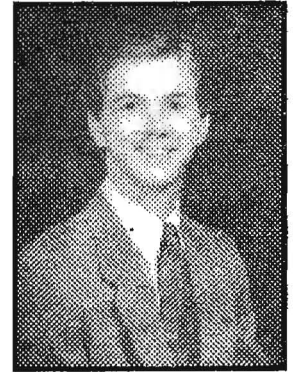
Upon graduation from FHU they moved to Nitro, WV where he preached from 1984 to 1989. In 1989 they moved to Glasgow, KY to work with the South Green Street congregation and have been there for the past eleven years.

He conducts several meetings each year, speaks at youth rallies, and is very active in writing. He is the editor of *BIBLICAL STUDIES*.



Terry G. Jones

Terry G. Jones was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and was raised in Toll Gate, West Virginia. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They have two sons – Austin (14) and Quintin (11).



Terry is a 1986 graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, TN. He received the A.A. and B.A. degrees from Ohio Valley College in 1996. He worked with the church in Mountain City, TN from 1986 to 1989. He then moved to Pennsboro, WV where he has been preaching to the present.

He serves as secretary on the board of directors of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp and is on the faculty of West Virginia School of Preaching. In addition, he is a writer for West Virginia Christian. He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in West Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana, and Virginia. He has also made missionary trips to the countries of Moldova and Ukraine.

Charles C. Pugh III

Charles C. Pugh III was born in Marietta, Ohio, and grew up in the Parkersburg area. He presently lives in New Martinsville, West Virginia, where he is a member of the Bridge Street Church of Christ.



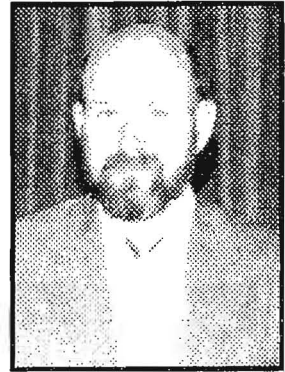
After thirteen years of pulpit preaching with the Bridge Street congregation he was forced, because of a voice problem, to resign from the pulpit work there effective in July of this year. He is now focusing most of his time and energy in the areas of writing, teaching Apologetics and other classes at the West Virginia School of Preaching, and preaching in gospel meetings and lectureships. He continues to assist in the work at Bridge Street as he is able.

Charles received his college education at Ohio Valley College, Harding University, and his Graduate work is in Apologetics and the Philosophy of Religion from Harding Graduate School of Religion.

He and his wife are the parents of two daughters and one son. They also have a granddaughter and a grandson.

Michael P. Reese

Michael P. Reese was born in Parkersburg. He graduated from Parkersburg High School in 1977, Freed-Hardeman University with a BS in Bible in 1981, and Fairmont State College in 1983 with a BS in Biology. He received his MA from Southern Christian University in 1989, and his Masters of Divinity in Bible in 1994 from Southern Christian.



He married the former Linda McCullough of Canton, Ohio, in May, 1980, and they have two children: Sarah Elizabeth (14) and Benjamin Michael (12).

His hobbies are hunting, fishing, and especially training and raising hunting dogs.

He worked with the Oakwood Road church of Christ in Fairmont, WV from 1981 – 1989. He has been with the Mannington church of Christ since 1989.

He has done mission work with Campaigns Northeast/Southeast in the summer of 1979, and with the Singapore, Malaysia Campaign in the summer of 1981.

Roger Rush

Roger Rush is a native of Fairmont, West Virginia. He has served as a minister of the Sixth & Washington Streets congregation in Marietta, Ohio, since October of 1985.



He is married to the former Diane Bond, and they have two children, Angela (24), a CPA in Columbus, Ohio, and Adam (21), a student at Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN.

Before coming to Sixth & Washington, he served the following congregations: the Hundred church of Christ in Hundred, West Virginia; the Little Hocking church of Christ in Little Hocking, Ohio; and the Lower Paw Paw church of Christ near Lower Salem, Ohio.

Steve Snider

Steve Snider is a native of West Virginia. He is married to the former Dianne Hatcher, and they have two children: Stephanie and Aaron.

He graduated from the Preston Road School of Preaching in Dallas, Texas, in 1977. He received his BA degree from Southeastern Biblical Institute in 1983, and his MA from Southern Christian University in 1992.

Steve has preached full time for two churches: Barrackville, WV (1977-1981 and 1983–present), and Alpharetta, GA (1981-1983). He is the speaker on a weekly radio program “The Bible Way Broadcast.”

He is an instructor at the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV. He also serves on the board of directors of WV Christian Youth Camp and is the Co-Director of Senior Week of camp each year.

He has made seven mission trips to India and has held Gospel Meetings in several states. He has also spoken at college lectureships and youth rallies.



