

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

APRIL, 1995

MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

IMPORTANT NOTICE !

With regret and apologies the editor makes the following announcements. I obviously lack my father's skill in business, and thus allowed *Word and Work's* financial condition to become precarious without noticing it.

As you know, we hoped to publish Tom Bradshaw's biography of R. H. Boll by mid or late 1995. Now we discover that this will be impossible unless we get donations of at least \$2,000. We still plan to publish the book, but do not know when it can be done. Please pray about this project.

2nd, we must raise the subscription price of this magazine to \$8.00 yearly, starting in July. Any renewals made by the end of June may continue at the current rate of \$6.00. But from July onwards, the price will be \$8.00 for a single subscription. Bundles of 10 or more copies to the same address will still be discounted at 50 cents per magazine (that is, 10 copies will cost \$75.00, not \$80.00).

We will also combine the May and June issues. This will help us overcome our lateness--which is sometimes the editor's fault, sometimes the printer's. So as not to cheat our subscribers, we shall extend each one's subscription by 1 month.

-- Alex V. Wilson

6th Annual Music Week at:
Antioch Christian Camp
355 Bark Branch Road
Frankfort, KY 40601
June 11-18

The music camp's three purposes are to praise God, edify and inspire our young people, and prepare our young people for greater service to the churches in the ministry of song. As always, we have some special people coming to help teach and lead groups. John Fulda, choral director at the Amite, LA High School, will be in charge and Jonathan Garrett will be assisting. They will be joined by Roc and Mona Moore, a wonderful couple from Harrodsburg, KY, with a moving testimony of God's saving grace. Please promote the Music Camp among your youth, grades 7 through college.

Did You Laugh Or Cry?

How did you like W&W's new unisex journalism in the March issue, pages 92-96? I'm talking about our using "him" to refer to Esther Forcade, &

"her" (3 times!) to refer to Sonny Childs . . . and several other instances.

We really do know our grammar better than that! I had proofread that section myself and marked those errors to be corrected. After they appeared in print anyway, the printers and I consulted. Believe it or not, the problem (both times) was due at least partly to the computer--the spell-check program, of all things! Don't ask me to explain that, I'm still in 1st grade where computers are concerned. Anyway, we're very sorry, & are trying to de-bug the system. --AVW

Tim and Dawn Yates
(and new daughter Lauren)
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We appreciate so much your interest in bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Malawi. As you may have seen in our newsletters, we are at about 50% of what we need to operate the mission. This is not enough

(Continued on Page 128)

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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In This Issue

Theme: "My Servants THE PROPHETS"

Editorial -- Alex V. Wilson	98
Isaiah, Prophet of God's Sovereignty -- John R. W. Stott	99
Causes and Cures Of Discouragement -- James W. Reapsome	102
A Prophet's Agony and Ecstasy -- Alex V. Wilson	108
Daniel--A Man of Moral Courage -- David Adeney	114
What The O.T. Prophets Tell Us About God -- Leroy Garrett	118
Questions Asked Of Us -- Carl Kitzmiller	122
The Logic of the Bible -- Paul S. Knecht	124
Voices from the Fields	126
News and Notes - Jack Blaes	IFC

THEME:

"MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS"

Alex V. Wilson

Important but neglected. Those words summarize the Old Covenant prophets whom we are emphasizing this month. Give them a fair chance and some prayerful brain-sweat, and they'll fascinate you. And challenge you. Yet I'll admit they're not easy. Listen to Philip Yancey's description (in *Christianity Today*, Oct. 2, 1987):

If you examine the Bibles of even the most diligent students, you may find a telltale band of white on the paper edges about halfway through. That mark of cleanness shows how seldom fingers touch the Old Testament Prophets. Although those 17 books fill about a fifth of the bulk of the Bible, they often go unread.

Why? I put that question to a Bible study class, and one young Christian bluntly summed up the class's sentiments: "The Prophets are weird and confusing, and they all sound alike." As I thought about his answer, I realized that he had captured the very problems that kept me away from the Prophets for many years.

Yet if we really believe that God inspired the entire Bible and that all of it is for our benefit (2 Tim. 3:16-17), how dare we ignore one-fifth of His Holy Word? We do so to our peril. We can profit from the prophets!

So, to help motivate us, this month we are running articles on each of the "major" (longer) prophets, plus an article that also glean lessons from many of the "minor (shorter) prophets. May our Lord speak to us from the experiences and messages of His servants.

"The majority of the true prophets were bitterly unpopular. As a result, they could seldom rely on a large audience for any length of time. Their messages had normally to be packed into short pregnant form, generally in poetry, that they might be the more easily remembered

"The fact that the bulk of the earlier prophets and not a little of the later (not Daniel) is written in poetry should serve as a warning to us in our interpretation. It means that we are dealing not merely with the natural exuberance of Oriental language, but with the vivid metaphors and pictures of poetry as well." -- H. L. Ellison, **MEN SPAKE FROM GOD**

ISAIAH, PROPHET OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

John R.W. Stott

My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts (Isa. 6:5)

During the second half of the eighth century B.C., while Amos and Hosea were prophesying to the northern kingdom of Israel, Isaiah and Micah were exercising their ministry in the southern kingdom of Judah. If Amos proclaimed God as the Judge of Israel, and Hosea as Israel's Husband, the great emphasis of Isaiah was that Jehovah is the King of Israel (44:6). Isaiah's ministry seems to have been inaugurated in the year that King Uzziah died. It was then that he saw the Lord, high and lifted up, reigning upon His throne as Israel's King. This vision never seems to have faded. The sovereignty of God which he saw that day remained fresh in his mind all his life. He learned to view all the circumstances of his life and of the nation's in the light of the kingship of Jehovah. Isaiah may justly be called "The prophet of God's sovereignty."

I. The Nature Of God's Sovereignty

The prophet recognized that the sovereignty of Jehovah expressed itself in various ways:

(a) *Jehovah is the ruler of the nations.* Isaiah was a statesman-prophet. He lived, as we do, in days of bewildering international unrest. Vast empires rose and fell around him. The whole Fertile Crescent was in a state of constant flux. The vision of God on His throne was granted him in the year that King Uzziah died, thus abruptly terminating a stable reign of fifty-two years. It was perhaps in the sense of insecurity which Isaiah felt at the conclusion of Uzziah's long and prosperous reign, that he was allowed to see the sovereignty of almighty God. The sovereignty of God is the massive, immovable rock, to which we may safely cast our little anchors in the storms of life. Heaven is God's throne and the earth His footstool (66:1), and He is reigning in the affairs of men. "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales." "All the nations are as nothing before Him: they are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness" (40:15,17). He uses the mighty empires of Assyria and Egypt as instruments of judgment upon His people. He "whistles" for them as for a fly or for a bee (7:8).

(b) *Jehovah is the creator of the world.* God does not just rule the nations; nature is under His control as well. He "created the heavens and stretched them out . . . spread forth the earth and what comes from it . . . gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it." "He sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers" (42:5; 40:22).

(c) *Jehovah is the only God.* He did not reveal Himself to Isaiah as being merely superior to other gods, the chief of a pantheon of deities. No; if Jehovah is ruler of nations and creator of the world, it is because He is the only God. "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God." "Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any" (44:6, 8).

II. The Consequences of God's Sovereignty

Isaiah's assurance of the sovereignty of God was no mere academic conviction; it permeated his thinking, his behavior and his ministry to Judah. Four consequences are discernible in those whose eyes have seen the King.

(a) *Moral obedience.* The prophet's own reaction on seeing the King was to cry "Woe is me, for I am lost." The King he saw was "The Holy One of Israel" (a title he employs thirty times), and the seraphim cried "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." By contrast, Isaiah became aware of his own uncleanness. Having seen the King's glory, he heard the King's voice, majestic and authoritative, asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah replied, "Here am I, send me," and the voice of God said, "Go!"

There is much in Isaiah, as in all the Old Testament prophets, bemoaning the contemporary laxity of moral standards. The inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem are even called "the rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah" (1:10). We read in the prophecy of immorality in the home, injustice in the law courts, and the oppression of the poor, widows and orphans. All this is an offense to Him who sits on the throne, whose name is "Holy."

(b) *Spiritual worship.* Isaiah quarrelled with the worship of Judah as much as with their behavior. He knew that sacrifices were of no value without morality. He also knew that God paid no regard to a formal religion which had no inward reality. "This people draws near to me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (29:13). Equally offensive was the false worship of idols. "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to graven images" (42:8).

(c) *Humble submission.* In his inaugural vision the prophet was struck as much by the greatness as by the holiness of Jehovah. His eye fell on a royal throne. He saw the Lord "high and lifted up." His train filling the temple, with six-winged seraphim veiling their faces and worshipping Him. In a word, Isaiah glimpsed the unique exaltation of Jehovah and realized in a flash the wickedness of human pride, of setting up ourselves and seeking to climb towards the level of God. All such human arrogance is an offense to the King of kings, who alone is exalted and to whom alone glory and honor are due (37:23). God alone is the "high and lofty one, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy," who says: "I dwell in the high and holy place . . . with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit" (57:15).

So the prophet pronounces woes against "those who are wise in their own eyes," "the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim" and "the pride of Moab," while He will punish "the arrogant boasting of the King of Assyria" and bring down the king of Babylon, symbolically called "Lucifer, the day star," who said in his heart, "I will ascend to heaven . . . set my throne on high . . . I will make myself like the Most High" (5:22; 28:1; 16:6; 10:12; 14:12-15). Referring to the day of judgment God says: "I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and lay low the haughtiness of the ruthless." "The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the pride of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day" (13:11; 2:10, 11). No one, whose eyes have seen the King will exalt himself or seek to arrogate to himself glory that is due to God alone.

(d) *Tranquil faith.* The "Holy One of Israel" is also the "Mighty One of Israel" (1:24). He is strong, sovereign and trustworthy. He is the King. He reigns from His throne. This being so, His people have no cause to fear, nor do they need to put their trust elsewhere.

Thus, when the northern kingdom of Israel joined forces with Syria to invade Judah, and the heart of Ahaz and the people "shook as trees of the forest shake before the winds," Isaiah met him and said: "Take heed, be quiet, do not fear; and do not let your heart be faint . . . if you will not believe, surely you will not be established" (7:4, 9). Twenty years later, when King Sennacherib of Assyria stood at the gates of Zion and his army laid siege to the city, and the king's counsellors advised an unholy defensive alliance with Egypt, the prophet said: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (30:15). Later still, when Isaiah foresees the inevitable Babylonian captivity, he urges the exiles to wait patiently until Jehovah raises up Cyrus to deliver them. Again and again God says, "Fear not."

So the prophet looks to the future, beyond the exile and the restoration, to the final establishment of God's kingdom. "Your eyes will

see the King in His beauty" (33:17). The Messiah will be a shoot from Jesse's stump, a Davidic king, endued with the Holy Spirit, a Prince of Peace, who will inaugurate a dispensation of righteousness and peace which will never end. "The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (14:27). Assured of the unfolding of God's sovereign will, His people should abide in tranquil faith. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusts in Thee" (26:3, 4).

Such are the consequences of the sovereignty of God. Sin and insincerity, pride and unbelief are inconsistent with the vision of the sovereignty of God. Let our eyes once see the King, and we shall go forth to glorify Him in holiness and worship, humility and trust.

Lessons from "The Weeping Prophet"

THE CAUSES AND CURES OF DISCOURAGEMENT

James W. Reapsome

Few of us would openly dare to call God a liar, or to accuse Him of failing to keep His Word. But when we Christians become discouraged, this is in fact what we do. We do not believe God will be true in the hour of testing, so we become discouraged--deprived of courage, confidence and hope.

Discouragement means that we admit in our hearts--and perhaps to our friends--what Jeremiah cried out to God 2,500 years ago: "Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" (Jer. 15:18.) Strong words? Undoubtedly. Honest words? Absolutely. God's servant was at rock bottom.

It will help us if we honestly face discouragement when it hits us. Nothing is to be gained by taking it lightly. We must admit the worst about it. And the worst thing about discouragement is that it means we have abandoned hope and confidence in God. It means we have been defeated by the Enemy of our souls. We have succumbed and Satan has triumphed. We have been put on the shelf, derailed, sidetracked from usefulness and fruitfulness.

Discouragement means that we see no hope for a breakthrough. "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed?" Jeremiah asked (15:18). He was looking for deliverance, but his great fear was that God would fail him, that God would

not be reliable in the midst of adversity. Jeremiah pictures himself as a weary traveller plodding across the scorching desert, counting on a certain stream for refreshing and strength. But suddenly he is seized with a terrible fear. What if the stream has dried up in the heat of summer? Will God be like that stream? Will God "run dry," as it were, just when I need Him so desperately in this time of hardship? Because of his perpetual, incurable suffering, Jeremiah was afraid that God would fail.

In the prophet's cry, and in his fear, we find mirrored our own times of discouragement. They seem perpetual. We forget the prior days of rejoicing. We cannot see a way out of our dilemma. So we begin to liken Him to the waters of an uncertain brook which fail when needed most.

But what caused Jeremiah to feel this way? What were the causes of his discouragement?

Three Causes Of Discouragement

First, there was persecution (15:15). Jeremiah was not long in the service of the Lord before he faced physical danger for his testimony (11:18-23). "Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered," was the plan of his fellow townsmen (11:19). They wanted to silence him, so they warned him, "Prophesy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand" (11:21). Violent hatred broke out against him in his own home town at the outset of his witness, and this was to become the pattern of his life.

Later, when Jeremiah went to Jerusalem and proclaimed the word of the Lord to the priests, the prophets and the people, they took him and said, "Thou shalt surely die" (26:8). This happened during the reign of King Jehoiakim, when it was neither popular nor healthy to pronounce judgment against the nation. Jehoiakim even sent men to Egypt to pursue the Prophet Urijah, and the king personally slew him (26:23).

Such pressure from persecution and opposition began to take its toll. The prophet could take it no longer, so he cried out bitterly to the Lord from his discouraged heart, "Remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors" (15:15). Chapter 15 was written during the height of King Jehoiakim's insolent folly, when he not only sought to kill Jeremiah (36:36) but burned his prophecy (36:23), lived in ease at the expense of slave labor (22:13-17), and finally rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

The second cause of discouragement was rebuke and mocking (15:15-17). Not only was Jeremiah threatened because of his message, but no one believed what he said. Hypocrisy and idolatry continued unabated in Jerusalem. The wicked prospered in their treachery (12:1). When Jeremiah predicted judgment, the people simply told him, "You won't be around to see our end" (12:4).

The third reason for his discouragement was loneliness, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand" (15:17).

It would be difficult to paint a more graphic picture of a discouraged man: Persecuted, mocked, alone. All of these things mounted as a huge, overpowering wave against him. He was filled with indignation because of it all. Why? Basically, because he had received no personal vindication. He was humiliated. Certainly he expected opposition, but eventually he expected a triumph. It was not forthcoming, so he assailed God who had gotten him into the mess.

Are we not discouraged for the same reasons? We get opposition from some quarters, though few of us are ever threatened with death because of our testimony. We are mocked. We preach, teach, witness and live a holy life, but no one takes notice of us or of what we are trying to do. Wickedness and sin abound, and the ungodly are happy in it, while all we get is rebuke for our service. And then we begin to feel lonely, deserted, unappreciated. By this time, discouragement has us in a vise-like grip.

We ought not to minimize the causes of discouragement. Any one of them is hard to bear. Nothing is more difficult than to stand alone for the Lord Jesus Christ. We can learn to endure persecution, opposition and rebuke, but it is extremely difficult to bear these things alone. How do these things vanquish us? When we think *we* are at stake! When we think *our* name and *our* service must be vindicated! We simply cannot bear the thought of continual opposition and suffering without some signs of visible success or victory with men, so we fall victim to pride. And when pride is wounded, discouragement pounces on us.

What is God's answer to His dejected, disillusioned servant? What way out does He provide? Can discouragement be cured?

Three Steps To Recovery

The first step in the remedy for discouragement is repentance and confession. "If thou return," says the Lord (15:19). In this word "return" we have the indication that God takes a stern view of such

accusations as Jeremiah hurled at Him. It indicated how far Jeremiah had strayed from the Lord. He must return. He must confess his wrong attitude toward God as sin, and then, God says, "will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me."

Jeremiah was out of fellowship with the Lord because of his discouragement. First, he was required to repent, confess and then be restored to a place of usefulness. Only by going this route could he again stand before God.

Because discouragement is sin, we today must confess it as such. This is always God's method (1 John 1:9). God is faithful, but we must take the first step of confession to Him. (To confess means we admit our discouragement and tell God very frankly why we are discouraged, exactly as Jeremiah did.) And then we must tell the Lord that, although humanly speaking we have every right to be discouraged, because we are His and because He loves us there is no reason to be discouraged--in fact, it is sin, and we tell Him so.

The second step in the cure is to separate what is precious and good in us from what is vile and worthless (15:19). To Jeremiah this meant getting rid of his natural impatience and hasty words so he could again be God's mouthpiece and proclaim His precious truth. This means again a basic recognition that the causes of our discouragement are fleshly: *we are hurt, we suffer pain, we are scorned, we do not achieve the prosperity of the wicked.*

But it also means recognizing that as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit; we are a new creation in Christ Jesus; we are partakers of the divine nature. Therefore, we can do all things through Christ; we can be more than conquerors in all these causes for discouragement. We need not be defeated by discouragement because we are complete in Christ, and we have the resources to rise above the circumstances of life.

The third step in deliverance from discouragement is a reminder of God's call. God does not promise Jeremiah that the sources of irritation will be removed. He says his enemies will be back. But he reminds Jeremiah of His provision: "They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee . . . And I *will* deliver thee" (15:20,21).

God's provision is the same as it was when He called Jeremiah (see 1:18, 19). There is no new truth here--no secret weapon against discouragement to pull out when the going gets tough. His hope is the same as it was at the beginning: the presence of God Himself. God reminds Jeremiah of what he was called to--opposition, fighting

and suffering--and then He reaffirms His promises. The third step out of discouragement is a call for renewed confidence and obedience, resting on the sure promises of God.

When we are discouraged, we must remind ourselves of what God has called us to:

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29).

"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).

"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

But, we must also rest upon His promises:

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

"I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20).

"We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Kept By The Call

Of course, this means we must be certain of our position in Christ, of our call to faith in Him. God took Jeremiah back to his call, and this is why his call was so important. It was the one thing that kept him going through 40 years of opposition, ridicule, and physical torture. Again and again, he endured because he was certain of God's call, and because God had called him to this task he could rest in His faithfulness and power. A more unpleasant, distasteful, difficult job no one ever had, but Jeremiah faithfully performed it on the basis of his call.

If we are convinced that our lot is God's specific assignment for us--His call--then we can serve, struggle and endure for His glory, claiming His promises and finding them true. Without this conviction, we shall be constantly casting to and fro, looking for greener pastures, looking for a way out, drifting and disgracing God, instead of standing firm and sure, facing and overcoming everything that comes our way.

It is important to notice that Jeremiah's discouragement did not arise out of known sin or backsliding; it struck him while he was

faithfully doing God's will. He was praying ("O Lord, thou knowest"); he was feeding on the Word of God ("Thy words were found, and I did eat them"); he was witnessing ("for thy sake I have suffered rebuke" . . . "I am called by thy name"); his life was holy ("I sat not in the assembly of the mockers").

This means that we will be tempted to discontinue proper things in times of discouragement, but these are the very things in which we must continue in faith. It is never right to stop doing what we know is God's will. "Return," said the Lord to Jeremiah .

When discouragement comes, try to analyze its source. Does it arise out of physical causes, as persecution or pain? Does it come from worry about failure, rebuke, family problems, a sense of beating the air, frustration instead of success? Is it because you feel alone in the struggle, unappreciated, deserted? It will help us to apply the remedy more effectively if we can understand the source of our discouragement.

Then we must confess our discouragement to the Lord, casting our care upon Him instead of carrying it by ourselves. We must reckon our wounded, worried selves dead, crucified with Christ, so we can live by His resurrection power. We must press on in faith, confident of God's call and of His promise: "I *will* deliver thee."

God did not remove the causes of Jeremiah's discouragement. As the nation of Judah plunged into destruction, opposition and persecution increased. Jeremiah stood alone, his message repudiated. But God's Word was true; judgment did come. But even then the rebellious remnant disobeyed the prophet and carried him off to Egypt, where he faithfully proclaimed God's message and where he died.

But what is significant is that after Jeremiah hit the bottom of depression and discouragement during the reign of King Jehoiakim, he never again doubted God, he did not complain of his lot. As the opposition grew more intense, so did Jeremiah's conviction. For the last twenty years of his ministry we read nothing similar to what is recorded in chapter 15. Apparently he had learned to endure hardness without accusing God of letting him down.

True Christian character is molded in adversity. We learn the lessons of faith and obedience gradually, and then God puts us to the test. God does not fail. He is true to His word and He will provide sufficient strength and courage for the hour (1 Cor. 10:13).

A PROPHET'S AGONY AND ECSTASY

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 1:1-3 and Psalm 137:1-6

[A man dressed in a robe such as might have been worn in Bible times appears suddenly behind the pulpit.]

Peace be with you all. Let me introduce myself: I am a prophet of the Lord God Almighty, and my name is Ezekiel. Have you heard my name before? It appears in your holy book; but sad to say not many are familiar with what I wrote.

I am from the far-away land of Judah. And I lived a long, long time ago. At least that's what people tell me. Your prophet--uh, what do you call him?...priest? teacher?--anyway, that fellow Alex Wilson said that about 26 hundred years have passed since I lived and prophesied!! Imagine that, if you can! Whew, 26 centuries. No wonder I'm tired. But really now, I don't look NEARLY THAT OLD, do I?

Well, some of you seem shocked to see me here today. And some of you look puzzled because I do not dress the way you do. Actually it seems to me it's YOU, not me, who dress funny. But maybe you wonder how I dare to come here today looking different from the rest of you, and no doubt different from the way Alex Wilson looks when he speaks to you. Maybe you think I'm trying to be sensational or something. Well, let me tell you that the Lord God on a number of occasions told me to do actions which were highly unusual. You might have considered them sensational.

Once He told me to build a model of Jerusalem and then pretend to lay siege to it--sort of like playing toy soldiers, as some boys do today, I'm told. Another time the Lord told me to cut off my hair with a dagger, and then take part of the hair and stab it over and over with the dagger--but to burn another portion of the cut hair (it stank!), and to throw the rest up in the air for the wind to blow away. The Lord had me perform these actions, and others like them, to arouse the attention of the people, and to provoke their curiosity so they would ask questions, and to teach them lessons. So you see, it's not so strange that today I am dressed in a different way from you.

Well, I was asked to tell you about my life and service for the Lord. I was born about the year which you now call 623 B.C., though of course we didn't call it that. You cannot possibly understand my life unless you realize that my father, grandfather, great-

grandfather on back for many generations were all PRIESTS. They all served in the Temple of the Most High God, in Jerusalem.

Unspeakable Privileges

What a thrilling privilege, yet what a challenging responsibility it was to be a priest of the one true God, the Lord of Israel. To lead people in the worship of the Almighty! And of course I, Ezekiel, son of Buzi, was destined to be a priest also. One day, when I reached the age of 30, I would be permitted to offer sacrifices which the people would bring to the Lord. I would present the thank-offerings, the sin-offerings, the burnt-offerings and all the rest. I might sometimes take the special bread or the sweet-smelling incense into the Holy Place of the Temple. I would also teach the people about the Law, and the meaning of the sacrifices and also the festivals like the Passover, the Day of Atonement, and the weeklong campout which we called the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles.

Oh, even as a boy I was eager for the time to come when I would begin my duties as a priest. Of course I would have to undergo special, detailed training for years before my term could begin, but I didn't mind that. I was willing to pay any price just so I could be a priest at 30. I loved the Lord very much, and wanted to follow in the steps of my forefathers.

Unthinkable Tragedies

But--when I was about 14, there occurred THE FIRST OF FOUR DRASTIC EVENTS that happened during my lifetime. (I will mention only three of them today.) Good King Josiah, who had led our people in a great revival, was killed in battle. Horrible day... I can still remember where I was when the shocking news came. Even worse, his successor did not continue the work of reformation. He was not devoted to the Lord as King Josiah had been. In fact he allowed the pagan religions to come back--the worship of false gods! Priests like my father tried to resist him, but they could not stem the flood.

Many evil practices began to flourish like weeds after rain: bloodshed, adultery, injustice in the courts. (You do not have such things as those here and now, do you?) And would you believe it--idols of false gods, that are no gods at all, were set up on many street corners even in Jerusalem! It was awful. The veteran prophet Jeremiah denounced these practices with sound and fury and many tears, but he was outnumbered by the false prophets. They supported the younger kings who led Judah far away from God and righteousness.

It was the year you call 609 B.C. when Josiah was killed. I hoped there would arise a 2nd Josiah who would bring another revival before my career as a priest would start. But conditions did not get better, they got worse. Oh, people still came to the Temple, but not as many as before. And many of those who came worshipped the false gods too, and practiced the vices I mentioned earlier!

Then, three years after Josiah's death, **THE SECOND TERRIBLE BLOW FELL**. It was the year 606 and I was still a teenager, when Nebuchadnezzar, the young king of Babylon, came with his army and besieged our holy city! Cruel soldiers surrounded us, and no one inside could go out for any reason, nor could anyone in the villages or countryside enter Jerusalem at all. Many days passed, and food supplies grew low and our hopes were even lower.

My nation, Judah, had to surrender to Babylon's king. He took some of our Temple utensils and vessels, used in the worship of the Lord, back to his land. He put them in the temple of his gods. To most people that would seem to prove that his gods were stronger than our God. Blasphemy! What humiliation! Nebuchadnezzar also took some of our most talented and educated young people, from the noblest families, to Babylon. Think of it: uprooted from their homeland and families and forced to live in the court of that pagan king. Yet some of the ungodly among us in Judah envied them! "They'll get to live in the most splendid city in the world," they said. Bah! Most of the youths who were carried away soon compromised their faith and even worshiped Babylon's false deities, but a few remained true to the Lord. They were led by a man you have heard of, named Daniel.

Meanwhile life went on in Judah, where I was. Sadly, most of the people grew more disobedient to the Lord. Though He had chastened us to bring us to repentance, the majority paid no heed. Nevertheless I became excited as my preliminary training for the priesthood began. God had raised up kings before who led great reformations. Wouldn't He do it again? That was my longing--to serve in the temple in days like those of Josiah or Hezekiah or Jehoshaphat, when the multitudes joyfully worshiped the Sovereign Lord and shaped their lives by His Law.

Blow Upon Blow, Woe After Woe

But because of Judah's apostasy, **THE THIRD AND HARDEST BLOW OF ALL FELL**. About 8 years after the armies of Babylon besieged Jerusalem the first time, our king broke his oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon, the world's superpower, was not about to overlook a rebellion like that. Their armies returned, and once more we were besieged. This time when we finally surrendered, we

were not treated so leniently. Our king himself was carried away as a captive to Babylon--along with his mother, his wives, and all our top government officials! And that's not all: 7,000 of our best soldiers were also dragged off into captivity, plus 3,000 of our highly skilled craftsmen, educated scribes, and priests. There were 10,000 of us in all. Yes, you heard me correctly--I said "US," for I was one of those 10,000 captives! Thus in 598 B.C., at the age of 25, I became a refugee, a displaced person living in a foreign land.

Can you possibly imagine what it was like, to be suddenly yanked up by the roots from your country, your city and your home...knowing probably you would never see them again? To say goodbye to your friends who were not deportees? To look for the last time, through tear-filled eyes, at the Temple you had longed to serve in? Can you imagine what it was like to leave behind us all our earthly possessions except what we could carry in a backpack plus whatever bags we could carry in our arms? To walk mile after mile in the hot sun, escorted by soldiers--and **THEY WERE NOT KIND!** We were prodded along day after day after day, for hundreds of miles, with babies crying and women wailing, men sighing and older folks groaning. Our guards jeered at us all, and made free with the younger women. They repeatedly hurried us on, laughed as we stumbled, and taunted us when we threw away prized possessions because we could carry them no longer. We were just despised REFUGEES, with no rights and no hopes.

I read that in your time, yes 1995, there are many refugees in the world. There are 20 million people displaced from their homes though still living in their own countries, and over 18 million people who are refugees OUTSIDE their homelands. Some of this springs from longlasting droughts and encroaching deserts, but most of it is due to terrorism or warfare. Do you ever think and pray for such desperate people, in Rwanda, Sudan, Bosnia, Palestine, Bangladesh and elsewhere? Can you picture the horrors of refugee camps with their crowdedness and squalor? Can you hear the cries of the malnourished and hopeless? Young person, have you ever thought of going to care for such suffering people, with food or medicine or education, but especially with the message of God's love? Some Christians are doing this, but their ranks are far too thin. Oh my friends, you have many comforts and conveniences here, but you live in a world of towering misery and heartbreak. Hear the cries of the suffering world, and share God's love with them. God judges those who hoard His blessings. I repeat: **GOD JUDGES THOSE WHO HOARD HIS BLESSINGS!** Consider the refugees in their hardships. I know: I was one myself.

After that horrible journey to the land of Babylonia, we were somewhat pleasantly surprised that the places we lived in were not

too bad. We lived together in communities, and toiled hard on the plantations of our masters, or else worked as craftsmen for them. But at least we could have our own houses and gardens. Yet we were far from our own land and people, and we were dreadfully homesick. Psalm 137 lays bare our feelings during our journey and our stay in exile. Put yourselves in our place; how would you have felt?

I was 25 yrs old when we were deported, and of course I was disheartened like all the rest. As the years c-r-a-w-l-e-d by, we became somewhat more accustomed to living far away from the land God gave our forefathers--but it still was very hard. The most depressing times were when the days of the holy festivals came, but we could not go to the Temple. Then, after five years in exile MY 30th BIRTHDAY DREW NEAR. My heart sank lower than ever, for that would have been THE TIME OF MY APPOINTMENT AS A PRIEST OF THE LORD. If only I were still in Jerusalem I could begin my ministry. But NOW..., HERE...I was nothing but a refugee far away from my land and the Dwelling of my God.

What good were all those years that I trained for the priesthood? Of what use were the regulations I had learned, the ceremonies I studied, the Psalms I memorized? --Some of you Americans may know something of the frustrations and bitterness I felt: I hear that some of you, after working faithfully for years in some job or craft, find yourself out of work because you have been replaced by a "machine," whatever that is. Well, I was out of a job before I ever began, because the Temple was THERE and I was HERE!

And Yet: Grace, and Glory!

And yet after I reached 30, to my utter amazement the Lord did something incredible. It was almost indescribable, though later I did manage to put it down in words. You can learn about it in detail if you study the opening chapters of my book. For now I can only say that THE LORD APPEARED! The Lord Himself appeared to me, in OVERPOWERING MAGNIFICENCE AND MAJESTY. And He did it here--in Babylon! I could not go to Him, but He came to me. As I later wrote, "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God."

More than that, He still had work for me to do for Him. He ended my unemployment, He called me into His service! Not as a priest, it is true, but as A PROPHET. "Son of man," He told me, "I SEND YOU. I send you to the people of Israel...and THEY WILL KNOW THAT THERE HAS BEEN A PROPHET AMONG THEM." Oh what mercy and kindness, that He chose me to be His Messenger. I don't mean the job He gave me was easy; in fact He

warned me at the start that it would be hard and that most of my hearers would reject the message I brought. Indeed, He gave me some difficult assignments through the years. And yet how glad I am that the Most High gave me the privilege of serving Him.

As a prophet I was a SEER, for He showed me His glory. And I was a SAYER, for He put His Word in my heart. I spoke His Word. I shared His Truth. I delivered His warnings and promises. My messages became part of the Holy Scriptures, for you and others to study. The Sovereign Lord fulfilled many predictions written in my book; other predictions He shall fulfill in the years to come. For He shall carry out all His purposes, and neither the shortcomings of His own people nor the opposition of His enemies shall stop Him. Indeed, as I wrote 70 times in my book: "MEN SHALL KNOW THAT HE IS THE LORD."

Friends, is He your Lord? Because of your conduct, do others know that He is the Lord?

Well, I thank you for listening to my story. And now I conclude. Perhaps today you are discouraged, very depressed, even deeply fearful. I know what that is like: When good King Josiah was killed, it was as though the world fell apart. When Jerusalem was besieged the first time, we thought nothing more dreadful could ever occur. Yet the increasing wickedness of my people as they deliberately broke the Lord's Law and also His heart--I later came to realize that this was a worse calamity than when foreign troops surrounded our Holy City. And then the 2nd siege: have you ever faced problems equal to that? Can your difficult circumstances match the horrors of my being wrenched from my homeland and marched far away at swordpoint? Never again to live in Jerusalem; never to serve in God's Temple; all my training seemingly wasted. Oh yes, I knew discouragement and fear firsthand.

And yet despite it all, the Lord was so good to me. He did spare and use me after all. I did get to serve Him--but in ways different from what I expected. The will of God often contains surprises. Thus from my own experience I urge you: Trust the Lord. Trust Him whatever your circumstances! Like me, you can experience that Whatever The Difficulties Life Can Bring Your Way, God Is Greater Still. You will know from experience that indeed HE is the LORD.

DANIEL--A MAN OF MORAL COURAGE

David Adeney
Minister to College Students

A Three Year Scholarship. A good position in government service after graduation. It was an attractive offer for a group of foreign students in a university in the Middle East. Their own country having been overrun by the enemy, they had been taken captive and were now to learn a foreign language and to receive training in the literature and science of their time. It was not an easy situation, for they had to adjust to a new culture and their whole future seemed to depend upon their ability to gain favor with their captors.

Many of the students felt that nothing should be allowed to jeopardize their opportunity of obtaining a good position after graduation. All of them came from a religious background where they had been taught to worship the true and living God. Now they found themselves in an idolatrous society and undoubtedly were tempted to compromise their faith. Among them however, were four whose courageous witness distinguished them from their fellow students. The leader of this small group was Daniel, who proved in God's hand to be the means of preserving the unique testimony of Israel which was then in danger of annihilation. The temple worship at Jerusalem was soon destroyed and the chosen people scattered. Those who had been carried to Babylon might have easily disappeared among the people with whom they lived, had it not been for the determination of Daniel to bear witness to the glory and power of the god whom he worshipped.

In every crisis of history when true faith seems to be in danger of being overwhelmed by the forces of darkness, God raises up a man. In the early days of Israel's history, it was Moses who delivered the people of God from destruction in Egypt. It does not require a great organization or large numbers, but there must be a nucleus of those whose lives are committed to an unflinching and uncompromising testimony to God. A student leader with faith and spiritual initiative can bring to life a group that has fallen in the net of dead orthodoxy with no impact upon the university community.

An Example In Witness

After graduation, Daniel was to reveal the glory of God in high places. This would never have been possible if he had been unfaithful in his witness as a student. The test came in a manner which may seem relatively unimportant. The Jewish students were being fed from the king's kitchen. This involved eating some food forbidden to the Jews and possibly partaking in feasts where some of the dishes

had already been offered to the gods of Babylon. It was extremely dangerous for Daniel to risk incurring the wrath of the king by refusing the royal provisions. Other students must have pointed out to him that he was jeopardizing his whole future career. They will have suggested that if he compromised in this matter he might well later on obtain an influential position in which he could bear an effective testimony to his God. To his fellow Jews, he was being unnecessarily stubborn. To fight for his faith on such a small issue seemed extremely foolish. To Daniel and his three friends, however, it was a matter of conscience, and regardless of the danger to their own lives and the hazard of wrecking their future careers, these young men stood firm. The principle was established in Daniel's life and he resolved that he would not defile himself. This determination led to action. Throughout his life, obedience to God was to be the controlling factor in all his relationships in this heathen society.

We live in an age when students profess their loyalty to God and often express their willingness to lay down their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Yet when it comes to some practical issue of campus life, they find themselves compromising with evil and doing the things that defile their witness and hinder them from being used to the uttermost in the service of Jesus Christ. They will not be required to eat food offered to idols in the cafeteria, but they may be tempted to worship idols of status, academic success or money by becoming involved in cheating, dishonest reporting or in social activities where it is impossible for them to reveal the purity and love of Christ.

The Christian life is not made up of a series of taboos, nor are we to take a negative view of life. But our lives must be governed by the principles of the Word of God. We are well aware of the dangers of legalism. We have seen all too often the emphasis on superficial things and the tendency to judge people by their attitude to so-called worldliness. A pride in abstaining from worldly pursuits may cause blindness to deeper and more subtle evils. But some Evangelicals have reacted against what they feel to be the bondage of narrow and legalistic attitudes and, unfortunately, in so doing have sometimes allowed themselves to be defiled by thoughts and actions which disqualify them from effective service. They have rationalized that they must understand the thinking of the non-Christians. So they have fed upon the books and pictures recommended by their friends, and forgotten that just as the strength of a man's body depends upon what he eats, so the purity and strength of a man's mind depend upon what he reads.

A Pattern In Prayer

Daniel's moral courage in the midst of most difficult circumstances surely sprang from the knowledge of God gained during his

times of prayer. He had little in the way of aids to devotion, though apparently He had access to the writing of Jeremiah and possibly some of the other prophets as well. When faced with an impossible situation resulting from Nebuchadnezzar's demand that the wise men should reveal his dream, Daniel called his three friends to prayer. God was intensely real to him. When prayer was answered he burst forth into an exultation of praise and worship. This regular exercise of faith was so important to Daniel that even when his life was threatened because of his faithfulness in prayer, "he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously"(Dan. 6:10).

It is doubtful that any man will accomplish much for God unless he knows the joys of real fellowship with the Lord of Glory. Prayer for Daniel was not just communing with "the ground of his being," a kind of subjective experience, as some describe prayer today. Nor was it a selfish appeal to God to meet his needs. Rather it was a pouring forth of his soul in a humble expression of love and worship. It also included much intercession for others, as we see in the prayer in the ninth chapter.

Daniel was deeply concerned about the desperate state of his own people and he firmly believed that his prayer could be the means of bringing deliverance. This confidence was based on the fact that he had discovered the will of God as it was revealed to the prophet Jeremiah (9:2). He saw clearly that it was sin which was hindering the fulfilling of God's purpose. So he said, "I turned my face to the Lord . . . with fasting . . . and made confession, saying . . . 'We have sinned . . .'" (9:3ff). Though he personally had been zealous in his service to God, yet he identified himself with the sinful people for whom he was praying. All too often we dissociate ourselves from the sins and failures that we see in others--in our church or Christian fellowship--and forget that membership of the Body involves corporate responsibility.

Daniel was very conscious of God's hatred of sin and the inevitability of judgment upon those who disobey His commands. Today, people feel that they are rather to be congratulated if they in God at all. If they condescend to acknowledge God, they hardly stop to ask whether a holy God will be willing to receive them in their sinful state. Much current theological thinking is concerned with the kind of idea of God which modern man will be prepared to accept. Little is said of man's need to humble himself before a God who hates sin and must act in judgment against the proud and the selfish.

Again and again Daniel referred to Israel's complete inability to offer any excuse for their disobedience and rebellion. The only pos-

sible hope rested in the fact that, "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we rebelled against Him"(9:9, AV). There is no complaint against God--only an acknowledgment that "the Lord our God is righteous in all the work which He has done." But Daniel knew that God was more than righteous. He was full of loving-kindness and mercy. And therefore from the depths of his heart he poured out his prayer, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy people are called by thy name" (9:19).

Such an intensity of faith is rarely found in our Christian student prayer meetings. Perhaps this is because of our preoccupation with a multitude of other things, including our Christian activities. "Prayer is the interruption of personal ambition." For when we pray we turn from the business that is demanding our attention and even from our own efforts to do God's work. We acknowledge that we are absolutely dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord. The effectiveness of any of our Christian groups may well depend upon whether or not there is a nucleus of Christian students who know how to pray as Daniel prayed. In his prayer life Daniel became involved in a great spiritual conflict. And, because he was faithful to the very end, he received a special revelation and fresh strength from the Lord and was described as a man greatly loved. If we are discouraged by the ineffectiveness of our witness, do we not need first of all to set aside an unhurried time, not for discussion, but for waiting upon God in a humble and expectant attitude?

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"... I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion, his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." -- King Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4:34-37

* * * *

"The Lord your God is with you,
he is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you,
he will quiet you with his love,
he will rejoice over you with singing."
--Zeph. 3:17

WHAT THE O.T. PROPHETS TELL US ABOUT GOD

Leroy Garrett

Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth—Isa. 6:5

In this article I want to point out some of the exciting things some of the prophets say about God, especially noting what these disclosures of the nature of God mean to us. This could be thought of as a listing of some of the great passages of the OT about God, but I intend that it be more than that. I want to show how the prophets' view of God was the basis of the message they preached. That is the lesson for us, for our religion (and our message to our world) will be no more than our view of God.

The above passage from Isaiah illustrates this. Isaiah was not ready to say "Here I am, Lord, send me" (Isa. 6:9) until he saw the holiness of God. This became his theme: Yahweh is "the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 1:4). And he did not see his own sinfulness until he saw the holiness of God, a timely message for our own time and for the modern church. We should be so awed by God that we tremble in his presence as Isaiah did in the temple.

Isaiah records that he actually saw God in the temple, "seated on a high throne" (Isa. 6:1). He heard angels sing of God's holiness. The temple was filled with smoke and the foundations of the threshold shook. Isaiah was so enraptured by it all that he wrote of being devastated: "I am undone, I am coming apart, for my eyes have seen the Lord." He now sees for the first time how weak and sinful he is: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5).

This is one of the great lessons of the OT: *God's holiness points up human kind's sinfulness; we can be cleansed of our sinfulness by turning to "the Holy One of Israel."* The prophet puts it succinctly in one of the Bible's great passages: "Come now, let us talk this over, says Yahweh. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18 Jerusalem Bible).

Of the many things that Jeremiah says about God, the most sobering is that he does not allow sin to go unpunished. Moreover, because of his people's sins he will take away their most treasured security. In the case of Israel this was the temple itself and the city of Jerusalem, which they considered impregnable and forever protected by God. "The temple of God is here!" was their cry of assurance (Jer. 7:4).

Nothing could happen to the temple or to the holy city, nothing, sins or no sins! Jeremiah told them they were trusting in delusive words, which brought their wrath.

You know the story of how the Babylonians came and destroyed both temple and city, just as Jeremiah said. Other prophets also told Israel truths it was impossible for her to accept. Ezekiel tells how "Yahweh rose to leave the city," (11:23) and Micah says woefully, "Zion will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble" (3:12). But all along the people were saying, "Is not Yahweh in our midst? No evil is going to overtake us" (Micah 3:11). It is a disturbing truth for us moderns who are reluctant to take sin seriously.

Jeremiah also pinpoints what repentance really means: "Circumcise yourselves for Yahweh; off with the foreskin of your hearts, lest my wrath should leap out like fire" (Jer. 4:4). The great truth that the real circumcision, which is identified as "the circumcision of Christ" in Col. 2:11, is spiritual was first set forth in the OT. It is also Jeremiah that appeals to God's mercy as he prays for his people, "Correct us, Yahweh, gently, not in your anger or you will reduce us to nothing" (10:24).

The prophet Hosea in one short sentence names the point of religion when he hears God say, "What I want is love, not sacrifice" (6:6). That it is one of the great truths of Scripture, stated in only a few words, is evidenced by the fact that it was one of our Lord's favorite passages. Jesus referred to it again and again in his efforts to show the Pharisees what true religion is all about (Matt. 9:13, 12:7). He told the Pharisees to "go and learn" what Hosea meant. Since they would have known the passage by heart already, he must have been telling them to go and do works of mercy, and then they would not be so critical of what he and his disciples were doing.

Amos is unique in that he was but a plain shepherd, and yet he excelled in using word-pictures that drove home his message with telling effect. He is a good example of how the Bible is often as relevant as today's newspaper. The sins Amos points to have a way of being prevalent in every age: Luxury of the rich, pride and arrogance, corruption in the courts, deceit in trade, oppression of the poor, deterioration of spiritual values. Amos finds the answer in the character of God, telling the people that the Lord is not interested in the shallow externals of their religion, but "Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (5:24).

While Nahum is a short, relatively unknown book, it has much to say about the awesomeness of God. He is wrathful, takes vengeance

on his enemies, and will not leave the guilty unpunished. He presides over the storm and whirlwind, rebukes the sea and drains it, and the mountains tremble before him. And He gives us this great line: "The Lord is slow to anger but immense in power" (1:3).

Micah also gives us one of those short summaries of what God expects of His people: "This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). The context for that statement is unique in that a trial is being conducted with the people the accused, God is the accuser, the prophet the prosecuting attorney and the surrounding mountains the jury. The verdict is not that God wants animal sacrifices by the thousands or libations of oil, which the people were willing to give to appease God, but he wants the hearts of men and women, that they treat each other justly, show tenderness, and be humble before the God of heaven.

Prophets like Nahum speak with passionate assurance that God is in control of this world, and that he is sure to judge the wicked and reward the righteous. He reassures us with: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust Him" (1:7).

Zechariah, who prophesied in the late 6th century B.C., learned basic truths from earlier prophets, such as the demand for morality in religion and strong faith in but one God. But unlike the earlier prophets, except Ezekiel, he gives angels an important role in unfolding events, which include Messianic expectations, including a Messianic Jerusalem. One thing he says about God is especially impressive. When he tells how Jerusalem, whose walls had been destroyed, will remain unwalled because it will need no walls, he has God saying, "I will be a wall of fire for her all around her, and I will be her glory in the midst of her" (2:5).

Habakkuk, like Isaiah, is awed by God, and he sees him as one who acts mightily in history: "I am doing something in your days that you would not believe if you were told of it" (1:5). The prophet sees God as "stirring up the Chaldeans" to perform his purposes (1:6). He gives an impressive metaphor in which he pictures himself as a watchman standing on a watchtower "to see what God will say to me." God tells him to write down what He tells him.

Among the things God told the prophet is another of those one-liners that makes its way into the New Testament, one that had great influence on both Paul and Martin Luther: "The just will live by faith" (2:4). The line probably means that people will survive by faithfully clinging to God rather than relying on their own resources. Habakkuk also gives us that majestic description of God: "Yahweh is in His holy

Temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him" (2:18). All these truths have staggering implications for our walk with God.

Malachi may say more about God for its size than any other book in the Bible. It begins with God saying to his people "I have loved you" and it ends with the promise of the coming of Elijah who will usher in the great day of the Lord. In between is the assurance that Yahweh will be the God of all nations, not just of Israel, and "My name shall be feared among the nations" (1:11-14). Unique to Malachi is an appeal for unity based upon the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man: "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" (2:10), and "Did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit?" (2:15).

It is Malachi that challenges the people to give liberally so that "I will open the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (2:10). And it was he that posed the intriguing question, "Can a man rob God?", which he answered by saying one robs God when he withholds tithes and offerings. This too speaks to us, for if we do not learn to give we do not receive.

And it is Malachi who gives us one of the great truths about God, that he listens to us and he is there when we need him most: "Those who feared the Lord spoke one with another, and the Lord listened and heard; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name" (3:16). With Malachi the OT ends on a note of hope, "But to those who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings" (4:2).

The OT, as Alexander Campbell pointed out, gave humanity the starlight age (Patriarchal) and the moonlight age (Mosaic and prophetic age). The coming of John the Baptist, the promised Elijah, gave us the twilight age. But with Jesus Christ came the sunlight age. He is the Sun of Righteousness, and it is in the healing rays of His wings that we are made whole. All of the great institutions and wonderful truths of the OT pointed to the rising of that Sun.

This is what the LORD says:

"Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom,
or the strong man boast of his strength,
or the rich man boast of his riches,
BUT let him who boasts boast about this:
that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD,
who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth--
for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Jer. 9:23-24

QUESTIONS ASKED OF US

Carl Kitzmiller

Daniel 2:33 pictures a divided Roman kingdom, each part represented by the two legs. In chapter 2:42 the toes represent ten kingdoms. If our interpretation is correct, would not five of these kingdoms come out of the Eastern Roman Empire? If our assumption is correct why are the present day interpreters making the future world power by having nine kingdoms coming from the Western part of the Roman Empire and only one, Greece, coming from the Eastern Empire? Why not five kingdoms out of each part?

Unfulfilled prophecy can be understood. Even the (hypocritical) doctors of the law of Jesus' day were able to tell the wise men to go to Bethlehem, that it was there the King of the Jews was to be born. Jesus, in speaking of the abomination of desolation, gave the specific admonition: "Let him that readeth understand." Peter declares prophecy to be a lamp shining in a dark place. This and much more which could be cited declares that prophecy is meant to be understood and that those who declare otherwise are in error. This writer then certainly does not hold with those who declare unfulfilled prophecy to be so dark and mysterious, so figurative, so written in code, that it cannot be understood.

On the other hand, neither does he suppose that God has made every point so clear that there will be no difference in the fulfillment and the interpretation that man may have given to the prophecy prior to its fulfillment. I am a bit skeptical of the too-certain, too-detailed minor points. In some cases God has given us the broad general outline without giving the more minute details. In other cases there are those things which will be evident in due season which are not needed by preceding generations or which involve knowledge not earlier available. The whole world looking on the bodies of the two slain prophets (Rev. 11:9) has taken on a meaning in our day of satellite television which preceding generations could not have understood. So while I believe unfulfilled prophecy is meant to be understood, I also believe there may be many features of it which will only be most evident at the time of fulfillment, and we need to be careful about a too dogmatic assertion that "this is it." When God interprets for us, the matter is different from our attempts to supply the meanings.

How does this apply to the vision of Daniel 2? Our querist could very well be right in suggesting that there ought to be five kingdoms from each of the two divisions of the Roman Empire. If we follow the symbolism all the way through, this makes a lot of sense. I for one am not so certain that the European Economic Community nations are so clearly the fulfillment of the ten toes as to label him wrong. On the

other hand, I do not see the issue to be so clear that I do not watch with considerable interest what happens concerning this development. About all anyone can say very authoritatively (unless they know some things declared in scripture that I am not aware of) is that the European Economic Community nations *could* be a significant development. Keep your eyes open! Too often, I fear, an informed and sensible Bible student sees a probability or a possibility and declares, "This could be what such and such a prophecy points to." Someone then picks that up, especially if it has been published a few times, and by his language makes it more certain. Finally, some less discerning ones may suppose they are dealing with what is a certain fact.

How far can we go in applying symbolism? Students of the parables long ago discovered that we cannot make every point of a parable to have meaning. While the OT tabernacle and temple had a lot of symbolism, some of it pointed out by inspired writers (Heb. 9:1ff), do we really have any basis for making every clip and loop in the curtains significant? What about prophetic symbolism? What do the knees of Nebuchadnezzar's vision signify? Nothing is mentioned in the account to give any significance to them. While one can make a most appropriate comparison between two legs and the divided Roman Empire, the account does not stress this fact nor offer such an interpretation. (The division mentioned is symbolized by iron and clay, v. 41, not the two legs.) Just as the two arms appropriately fit the dual nature of the Medo-Persian rule, so the two legs are appropriate to the divided Roman Empire, but the account does not really stress this at all. Ten toes are mentioned, and very likely on the image these toes were evenly divided to the feet as they are on any man; but they are mentioned as ten, not two sets of five. Moreover, in Dan. 7, generally recognized as a somewhat parallel vision, the ten horns are presumably on one head (7:7). I mention these things to point out that the Holy Spirit may not have meant the symbolism to be carried to the point of indicating five nations from each division. So while I would not label the suggestion wrong, neither can I dogmatically declare it right and the only answer that will satisfy. If it should turn out to be this way, I will not be surprised and can glory in the demonstration of the wisdom of God. I suspect we are going to be greatly surprised at how much God has told us we did not discern. But if it does not turn out that every detail of the image has significance, then I'll know that God simply has difficulty in communicating things so clearly we do not misunderstand.

Let us not get so engrossed in minor points of interpretation that we miss the greater issues. This does not at all suggest that the one asking the question has done so. Moreover, it is good to have commonly accepted explanations and interpretations challenged so that we do not grow lax and undiscerning. I must confess that I do not believe I have ever specifically and critically thought on this point until the question came to me.

THE LOGIC OF THE BIBLE

4th Installment

Paul S. Knecht

The Nation Of Israel

The gospel is for everyone and God accepts all who believe it. Among the Jews this brought consternation. They had struggled to keep the many laws of the Old Testament in order to be acceptable to God, only to find themselves left out of the mighty moving of God's Spirit, and Gentiles were actively involved in it! It is to this problem that Paul addresses himself in the book of Romans. He identifies *two* Israels for us: those who follow the faith of Abraham as discussed in our preceding installment, and those who are merely physical descendants. The difference is just in the fact that some discovered their inadequacy apart from God and were drawn to Him in faith for forgiveness and healing while most continued in self-righteous independence. They professed to keep the laws even in the midst of their most flagrant violations.

When God proposed at Sinai that if they would keep His laws, He would enter covenant relationship with them, they quickly agreed to do it--without any real awareness of how much was to be required. God knew of their moral pride and its unfoundedness, but they didn't. The law was delivered and the covenant made binding to awaken Israel (through failure) to her moral incapacity apart from God and her utter dependence on and need for Him. With some it worked. David who fancied himself moral and upright, a lover of God, discovered finally that he was a sinful man, having broken virtually every commandment. At that point the magnificent promise of God, in which David had exulted, could hardly have seemed valid. Yet David penitently asked forgiveness and learned that his place before God was assured by God's grace and not by his own worthiness.

But as a nation Israel never learned this. She felt no need for a suffering Messiah and no time for talk of being "born anew." Paul tells us that Israel stumbled at Christ, and God flung out His promise and grace to the Gentiles in a strategy to reach Israel by provoking her to jealousy! Paul here picks up the language of the Old Testament where Israel is depicted as an unfaithful wife and God as her husband determined to finally win her to Himself. The nation of Israel, Paul tells us, whatever her failings, is loved for the fathers' sake--because of God's love and relationship to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Thus, the prophets declare God's unending commitment to Abraham regarding *this nation*. And Paul reaffirms it in Romans 11. He says that if Israel's rejection of Christ brought blessing and opportunity to the Gentiles, how much more shall Israel's acceptance of Christ bring blessing to the world! The "great tribulation" of which Jesus spoke and "the time of Jacob's trouble" described in the prophets point us forward to a national turning of Israel--back to God who thus disciplines her, and to Jesus, her Savior and King. But that repentant endtime generation of Jews will not be part of the church. The church as the bride of Christ--as spiritual Israel--is to be co-ruler with Christ over those Jews and the rest of earth's nations in the Kingdom of God when the millennium begins. (Matthew 19:28; Revelation 2:26; 3:21)

The Rest Of The New Testament Consistent With This Development

Like Romans, the rest of the epistles presuppose an understanding of the truths established above. All of them assume an understanding of the gospel of Christ and His Kingdom as presented in Acts (see 8:12; 14:22; 17:7; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23 & 31). And each has a primary objective. They provide instruction on specific issues or implications of the gospel, warning about doctrines or life-styles inconsistent with the gospel, encouraging believers to press on, etc.

The Corinthian letters offer solutions to the practical problems of corporate worship and Christian living to a congregation that included ex-thieves, drunkards, homosexuals, etc. The leverage used to motivate these believers to exemplary living is not the promise of heaven or threat of hell but a solemn warning that those who continue in their evil ways will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The second letter shows that this admonition was effective. (7:11)

Galatians is a warning against relapsing into legalism and its consequent bondage. Abraham, as always, is the model of justification. The church at Galatia is reminded that their justification would result only from believing God, as he did--"and it was credited to him as righteousness." Those who, to the contrary, *rely* on observing the law are under God's curse, because no one continues to do *everything* in the law. Furthermore, if righteousness could be gained through law-keeping, Christ died for nothing. He need not have come and died if we could gain salvation on our own. Yet Paul goes on to say that God's Holy Spirit within us will produce loving character, "and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Indeed, he warns that those who live for the flesh (self-centered) "will not inherit the kingdom of God."

To the Ephesians Paul presents the unsearchable riches of the Christ, in whom we receive all spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms. In the Lord Jesus God chose us to be His holy children, provided us with a glorious inheritance, and gave us the Holy Spirit when we believed. Formerly we Gentile were excluded from God's covenants. But now in Jesus the Christ, Jewish and Gentile believers have been made into "one new man"--even the body of Christ in the world today. Because of our high calling we should live in unity with our fellow believers and practice goodness in our communities and families. Indeed (the warning sounds again), "of this you can be sure: no immoral, impure or greedy person . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison. They too were suffering for the Christ. Yet he kept rejoicing, for Christ was worth living or dying for. He Himself gave all and suffered all--for which God highly exalted Him--and we should adopt His attitude. It is worth losing all things in order to gain the Christ and know Him.

Colossians, another prison letter, is written to believers Paul had never met. But it is evident that they have understood and embraced the gospel, for God has forgiven their sins and brought them "into the kingdom of the Son he loves." This shows our *present* citizenship in the kingdom, while the preceding verse again mentions the kingdom as our *future* inheritance (1:13,12 & Phil. 3:20). Paul's burden for the Colossians is that they might more fully comprehend the vastness of the work and majesty of the Christ, and His utter sufficiency for all of their needs. [*To be continued. The author welcomes feedback: 8013 Circle Drive, Georgetown, IN 47122.*]

VOICES from the FIELDS

Earl, Sr. & Ragen Mullins
P.O.Box 1509 New Albany, IN 47150

Spring 1995

American teachers will again return to Kineshma for Christian education workshops & seminars from June 9 to June 24. Because of other commitments in Russia, Earl will not be with this team but he will be with the Christian student's summer camp team from July 21 to August 5.

Earl will be gone most of the time from now until the middle of August. Last week he was given another full plate in that he will now be in charge of the ACSI Student Ministries Program. We do not know, as yet, all this will entail, but realize that without the Lord's intervention and help, it is more than Earl can handle by him-

self. Yet the program would not have continued, or would have suffered a major setback if Earl had not been able or willing to accept the directorship of it.

[Condensed from newsletter. Write above address to get on the mailing list.]

Dennis and Betty Allen

Mar. 9, 1995

It's hard to realize we've been in Pasadena over a month. On November 29 I made an inquiry call to the U. S. Center for World Mission about the possibility of doing some volunteer work here. The next morning Madeleine called before we got up to tell us that Daddy Knecht had passed away. We felt the Lord was confirming to us that He wanted us to be here. We left Salem on Feb. 1. Steven is with us. We are to be here for three months doing volunteer work.

The U. S. Center for World Mission is dedicated to informing and encouraging churches and mission-sending agencies regarding the unreached people groups of the world where there is as yet no viable church that is able to propagate itself. It is estimated that there are yet about 11,000 such groups all over the world. For example, India is one country politically, but has over 3,000 people groups.

Dr. Ralph Winter had the vision for this place. It is really a miracle how this property became available and how God provided it. Many of the people working here are supported by churches and individuals. Others are doing volunteer work. There are several retired missionaries here giving their time and effort. This is not a mission-sending agency, but encourages others with the vision that it is possible to complete the great commission. There are many mission organizations targeted toward China. One is targeting the 67,000,000 people in the various ethnic groups in China--most of whom are still largely unreached.

This is a very stimulating place to be. We get many encouraging reports of what God is doing all over the world--things that Christians would really be encouraged to know. For instance, a few days ago there was a delegation here from North Korea. They stated that in North Korea, William Carey International University which is located here is better known than Yale and Harvard! It was as a result of contacts made here that Billy Graham was invited to preach there. They have also opened two churches. Each morning during the week the whole staff meets together for prayer, sharing from the Word and hearing new reports of what is going on around the world. There are some very stimulating discussions. There is also a prayer room maintained 24 hours a day. Each person takes a four hour shift about twice a month. This has been done for years.

Our plans? At the end of April we plan to return to Indiana because Carol and Fred and children are returning from England. As to the long term we are still seeking the leading of the Lord. While we have health and strength we want our remaining time to count for the Lord, so we covet your prayers. It has been very encouraging to us to have contact since we came here with several families both from the church in Hong Kong and the church in Manila.

NEWS and NOTES

to sustain us if we were to leave for the field right now. We have, therefore, moved our target date of May 23rd back to August 1, 1995. This will give us some extra time to visit churches during their summer programs. We regret taking up any more time, but we can only expect that the Lord has greater plans and that He will raise the support in His own time. We are very anxious to get to the mission field!

Maple Manor Christian Home

Adult Division, Sellersburg, IN
47172

Our census holds fairly steady. We still have one open room on the Residential Wing. The Nursing Wing is full. Thirty-seven is our total census. A thought that I want to bring to our readers, especially to the churches, is the plan of having a special offering once a year for the Home. One church does this every October and it gives a good boost to the end of the year needs. I am proposing that 11 more churches do this. Pick a month and let me know that your congregation will take up a special offering for Maple Manor Christian Home Adult Division. One church having a special offering each month will be an enormous boost to us.

Cherry Street Church of Christ

Cherry Street Church had their annual homecoming Sunday, March 12. Bro. Bennie spoke at the dedication of the addition to their facilities. Many believers from local congregations came to join in worship and praise to our

Lord for His blessings on the faithful at Cherry Street.

Gallatin, TN

Sunday night we enjoyed hearing from some of our young men. Ryan Dunn, David Leonard, Josh Benson, Andy Jeffery, Eric Vaughn, Brett Catron and Matthew Anderson all did a great job with all of the responsibilities involved in preparing and delivering a corporate worship assembly. A special thanks goes to Eddie Flowers for all of the many hours worked in training and organizing this youth worship service. We need to encourage our young men to be leaders in today's church, so that we will have strong men of God as the leaders in the church of tomorrow.

Southeast Church of Christ

Youth Scoop. . . The Missions to Mexico team would like to thank everyone for the \$230.00 that was donated at the Chili Supper Wednesday. A special thanks to all those who planned and helped.

Starting this month we are beginning a youth newsletter called the "Youth Yodeler." This will contain all of the youth activities for the month. Take a copy and put it on your refrigerator.

Church of Christ at Turkey Creek, LA

Young Men, we are thankful for you. The young men will be in charge of the evening meeting today. We are thankful for their willingness to be

used. They always do a good job. Be sure you are here to be blessed.

Politically Correct Bible Published

The New Inclusive Translation of the Bible, published by Oxford University Press and due out in March, is being labelled the "politically correct" Bible. In it, Jesus is no longer the "Son of Man" but the "Human One." Jesus' divine "Father" has been transformed into the divinely hermaphroditic "Father-Mother." Children are no longer told to "obey" but rather "heed" their parents, while wives are to "commit" to their husbands rather than "submit." (The Pastor's Weekly Briefing, 2/24/95)

Church of Christ, Jennings, LA.

Friday, Feb. 24, some 26 travelled to San Antonio for a great weekend at the South Texas Youth Conference. Over 2600 registered and some 1400+ worshipped at Oak Hills Church of Christ Sunday. Safe travel, good behavior, and great rally--thank God for all!

Cramer and Hanover

Praise the Lord! What other way can Adele & I express to you our thanks for the opportunity we have just experienced? In seven days of sight-seeing, we experienced over fifty sights all brought to life after having them read in both the Old and New Testaments. We had lectures by scholarly men who are doctors in their fields, and we had a Moslem tour guide who lived in Old Jerusalem on the Via Delorosa and was thoroughly knowledgeable of the Jewish Christian and Moslem heritage in the area.

In our group of thirty we had a Christian heritage with brothers and sisters from other denominations from Texas, Maine, Kansas, Indiana, and New Jersey. What a fellowship to share in experiencing the calm on the Sea of Galilee, the wisdom from the

Sermon on the Mount, and the joy of the empty tomb.

Our lives have been touched by walking where Jesus walked and the result has been experiencing more of Christ in us. His Word has already started to take on new and exciting meaning as we now see the things we'd only read about before!!! --Bennie Hill

More News from LA

A phone call from "Bro. Val" on March 10 brought the following news: The Arcadiana Christian Workers' Clinic had just completed a fine session studying the book of Hebrews. Various brothers shared in the teaching. Attendance averaged around 50 despite widespread sickness during the winter.

A 42-year-old man & his 14-year-old son had just received Jesus as Lord & Savior there at Crowley. Bro. Val has had to cut down on outside responsibilities due to his limited strength (only 1 lung), but carries on fully in the ministry at Crowley congregation.

News From the Northeast

We may have a building to use; a more permanent place. The former Westwood Church building has not been in use for some time. It is right in the center of the city of Woodbury, the building is small, but we can have multiple services there, use the facilities for other functions, host a Christian Day Care Center for single mothers, and be established in the community. We are praying about making the move.

We have seen some folks who are really hungry for the Lord. We have one new brother who, although weeks old in the Lord, is so on-fire for God that he is not able to contain himself. We have a new mature Christian couple who have joined us as well. It is really neat to see God moving in such a manner. -- Joe & Anne Domico, Box 170, Westville, NJ 08093

Mission Trip to Honduras

For the 2nd year in a row, several students from Portland Christian High School plus adults from the Louisville

area will demonstrate Christ's love in practical ways down in Central America. Some will go from June 22-July 10, others for half that time. They will participate in free medical/dental clinics, & also pour concrete floors in homes of needy people. (Mud floors lead to parasites & sickness.) They'll also engage in open-air evangelism in Honduras' capital city. And some will help paint or pour concrete at the Christian school where Ted & Crystal Hardin work.

Last year's similar trip brought great blessings both to the Hondurans and those who went from the U. S.

From Indiana to Louisiana

Effective mid-May, Jeff Mayeux, minister of the Highway Church in Pekin, IN, will move to LA. By then he & his brother Jon will be finished with their studies at School of Biblical Studies in Louisville. Jeff, Julie his wife, & daughter Lauren will move to the Hammond area where they will live near Julie's parents in Loranger. Jon will return to his parent's home in Washington, LA. His father is suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. Pray for these young men, who have been a blessing to the Kentuckiana area during their years of study at SBS.

SBS Training Conference--Very Helpful

SBS' annual spring training conference sought as usual to help local churches grow stronger. And the teacher-training that was given this year was excellent. Those who attended were provided with basic principles & also creative approaches for making God's word come alive in those we teach. Those who attended were excited by what we learned. But crowds of folks who didn't attend missed many blessings.

Bound Volumes of W&W 1994

All 11 issues of W&W during 1994 (but not including the S.S. Quarterlies) are nicely bound in hardback covers. This is now available, @ \$22.00 plus postage. Sorry about the inflation, but we pay the binder \$21 so we're hardly making anything on it. Just a few years ago the cost was about 1/2 what it is now. The volumes do look nice, and would make a nice addition to your church library.

Robert & Joy Garrett Here by Sept.

They are scheduled to reach Louisville from Zimbabwe in early Sept. & to attend the Senior Citizens' Week at Woodland Bible Camp Sept. 10-14.

After visiting family members they'll be available to visit churches in Kentuckiana from early Oct. onward. They hope to be in Louisiana during Jan. -March or so. From then on their home base will be in Louisville till they return to Zimbabwe Aug. 19, '96. Victor Broaddus will be in charge of scheduling their visits except while they'll be in Louisiana. (They're asking Doug Broyles to organize their time there.)

Robert writes, "One thing I very much want to do is hold some meetings related to prophetic studies at as many churches as possible. I often feel so useless during furlough when I visit a church on Sun. to talk about Africa & then just twiddle my thumbs for a week until the next Sunday. The Lord has given me something to teach & I want to teach it. I would like to not only tell about Africa but also hold a meeting--at those churches that are willing--during that same week through Fri. night. No remuneration requested nor required, so it will not upset any budgets. I would like to present some lessons on the "The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" which I believe would be very profitable."