

"THE MAN WHO WANTED TO BE SOMEBODY FOR GOD"

I CHRONICLES 4:9-10

"I told you I was sick!"
Epistle
body - feel doctor - genealogy

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, WHILE ON VACATION IN VIRGINIA, MY FAMILY AND I SPENT AN HOUR OR SO WALKING THROUGH THE CONFEDERATE CEMETERY, READING THE NAMES AND INSCRIPTIONS ON THE TOMBSTONES. THIS MORNING, WE WILL MEET AN INTERESTING MAN IN THE GRAVEYARD OF THE O.T., NAMELY, THE BOOK OF CHRONICLES. MOST OF US FIND CHRONICLES TO BE DULL READING. THE FIRST NINE CHAPTERS RECORD THE GENEALOGIES OF IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN ISRAEL TO THE BEGINNING OF THE KINGDOM UNDER DAVID. IN THE HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS, CHRONICLES WAS ONE BOOK. IT WAS DIVIDED INTO TWO BY THE SEPTUAGINT TRANSLATORS. MANY CHRISTIANS APPLY THE SKIP METHOD WHILE READING CHRONICLES, BUT IN THIS BOOK FROM TIME TO TIME AN INTERESTING AND UNUSUAL PERSON ARRESTS YOUR ATTENTION. COMMENT CONCERNING FRANKLIN LOGSDON READING THIS BOOK WHILE TRAVELING AND HIS DISCOVERY OF JABEZ. IT WAS UNDER HIS MINISTRY IN 1953 THAT I FIRST SAW THIS INTERESTING BIBLE CHARACTER. IN 1976, WHILE CONSIDERING THE GREAT PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE WE TOUCHED UPON HIS LIFE. TODAY, IN MORE DETAIL. IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED A SPIRITUAL CLINIC OSWALD SANDERS CONSIDERS THE PRAYER OF JABEZ AND THE CHAPTER TITLE IS "GOD-SANCTIONED AMBITION". IN THE LIFE OF JABEZ WE SEE A MAN WHO WANTED TO BE SOMEBODY FOR GOD AND IN THAT RESPECT HE IS UNIQUE WHETHER IN THE BIBLE OR IN OUR TIME.

I. HIS PERSON - v. 9

TWO OUTSTANDING ASPECTS OF HIS PERSON ARE REVEALED IN V. 9:

A. HIS HEREDITY

JABEZ HAD A HEREDITY HANDICAP. THIS IS REVEALED IN THE STATEMENTS ABOUT HIS BRETHREN AND HIS MOTHER. THE TEXT SAYS JABEZ WAS "MORE HONORABLE THAN HIS BRETHREN". THE WORD HONORABLE MEANS DISTINGUISHED OR NOBLE. THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT

JABEZ' CHARACTER THAT STOOD OUT ABOVE THE OTHER BROTHERS. JEWISH WRITERS HAVE AFFIRMED THAT JABEZ BECAME A DOCTOR IN THE LAW WHOSE REPUTATION DREW SCRIBES FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO HIM AND EVENTUALLY A TOWN WAS NAMED IN HIS HONOR (2:55). NOTHING OF A DISTINGUISHABLE NATURE COULD BE SAID ABOUT JABEZ' BROTHERS, AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEY ARE NOT EVEN LISTED IN THE TEXT. THE POINT IN CONTRAST WITH HIS BRETHREN IS THE FACT THAT JABEZ DID NOT LET HIS BROTHERS LACK OF SPIRITUAL INTEREST RESTRICT HIS SPIRITUAL GROWTH. SOMETIMES BELIEVERS HIDE BEHIND THE LACK OF SPIRITUAL INTEREST ON THE PART OF OTHER PEOPLE AS THE BASIS FOR THEIR OWN LACK OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS. OUR HINDRANCES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE MAY BE TRACED TO ONE SOURCE AND ONLY ONE, NAMELY OUR OWN SPIRITUAL INEPTITUDE OR LACK OF DEDICATION TO THE LORD. PLEASE DON'T BLAME THIS ON SOMEONE ELSE! (IN THIS REGARD JABEZ REMINDS ONE OF JOSEPH JACOB HAD SEVERAL SONS BUT IT WAS JOSEPH WHO WAS DIFFERENT IN BEHAVIOR YET THE SAME IN BLOOD. ACCORDING TO GEN. 37:2 "JOSEPH BROUGHT UNTO HIS FATHER THEIR EVIL REPORT," SUGGESTING THAT JOSEPH REPORTED TO HIS FATHER CONCERNING THE MISCONDUCT OF HIS BRETHREN. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE EVIL NATURE AND DEEDS OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS WAS DEMONSTRATED LATER ON IN THEIR TREATMENT OF JOSEPH. THE OLDER BROTHERS DID NOT BELIEVE IN JOSEPH'S DREAMS BECAUSE THEY DIFFERED FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE. THEY HATED JOSEPH BECAUSE OF HIS FAVORED POSITION WITH HIS FATHER AND BECAUSE OF HIS OUTSTANDING MORAL CHARACTER.)

B. HIS MOTHER

THE NAME JABEZ MEANS "SORROWFUL." TO ME, THIS WOULD INDICATE THE SADNESS AND SOMBER ASPECT OF JABEZ MOTHER AND SHE PASSED ALONG HER OWN "PSYCHOLOGICAL HANG-UPS" TO HER SON; THAT IS, SOMETHING IN HER LIFE, PERHAPS EVEN AT THE BIRTH OF JABEZ, CAUSED HER TO GIVE HIM THIS SAD NAME. (A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE OCCURED TO RACHEL IN GEN. 35:15 WHEN BENJAMIN SHE NAMED HIM BENONI, WHICH MEANS "THE SON OF MY SORROW." BUT JACOB QUICKLY RENAMED HIM "THE SON OF MY RIGHT HAND OR STRENGTH." IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SAD INDEED TO ALLOW A BOY TO GO THROUGH LIFE WITH A NAME WHICH SPOKE OF SORROW AND SADNESS. JACOB APPARENTLY SAW THE DANGER OF SUCH A

Leah

SITUATION AND CHANGED HIS NAME. IT MAY BE THAT RACHEL'S LONG LIFE OF DIFFICULTY BEGINNING WITH A CUNNING FATHER IN THE PERSON OF LABAN, WHO TRICKED JACOB CONCERNING RACHEL AND HIS WORK TO GAIN HER HAND. APPARENTLY RACHEL LIVED IN A HOME WHERE JEALOUSY AND ENVY FROM AN OLDER SISTER WHO APPARENTLY WAS DADDY'S PET CREATED PROBLEMS. FROM THE TEXT OF GENESIS IT IS OBVIOUS THAT RACHEL NEVER GOT OVER CLINGING TO THE IDOLS OF HER OLD LIFE. YET, SHE WAS A WOMAN WHO WAS LOVED BY JACOB, BUT APPARENTLY HIS LOVE DID NOT BRING SATISFACTION IN LIFE SHE DESIRED AND SHE DIED IN CHILDBIRTH IN A SPIRIT OF GLOOM AND SADNESS WHICH WAS REFLECTED IN THE WAY SHE NAMED BENJAMIN AT HIS BIRTH.) THE POINT OF THIS PASSAGE IS THAT JABEZ DID NOT LET HIS FAMILY, HIS ENVIRONMENT OR CIRCUMSTANCES DIM HIS SPIRITUAL DESIRES AND INTERESTS IN SERVING THE LORD.

His responsibility!!

C. HIS OBSCURITY

JABEZ DID NOT MAKE THE HEADLINES IN HIS PURSUIT OF SPIRITUAL GOALS IN LIFE. MOST PEOPLE, APART FROM BIBLE STUDENTS, WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE OR MAY NEVER HAVE HEARD OF JABEZ. THEY KNOW ABOUT MOSES, ABRAHAM, DAVID, AND THE PROPHETS BOTH MAJOR AND MINOR, BUT A FEW KNOW ABOUT THIS REMARKABLE AND WONDERFUL MAN. JABEZ WAS A NOBODY FROM NOWHERE, BUT GOD KNEW WHERE HE WAS AND WHAT HIS INTERESTS WERE AND GOD HONORED HIS LIFE AND DESIRE TO SERVE GOD FIRST AND FOREMOST. WHEN A PERSON'S LIFE IS ANALYZED IN THE FINAL SENSE OF THE TERM, HOW MAY ONE BETTER CHARACTERIZE OR DESCRIBE THE EFFECT OF A PERSON'S LIFE BETTER THAN HE DID THE WILL OF GOD AND GOD HONORED HIS LIFE, IF THIS VERSE TELLS US ANYTHING, IT REMINDS GOD'S PEOPLE EVERYWHERE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO RISE ABOVE HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT, AND CIRCUMSTANCES TO EXCEL IN LIFE FOR GOD. WE NEED NOT WALLOW IN THE SPIRITUAL DOLDRUMS AND DULLNESS OF SPIRITUAL INEPTITUDE. IF THE SPOTLIGHT OF PUBLIC ATTENTION DOES NOT SHINE ON YOU AND ME LET US BE GLAD THAT WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE GOD TO THE FULLEST OF OUR ABILITY RIGHT WHERE WE ARE. WE DO NOT NEED THE HEADLINES OR THE SPOTLIGHT TO BE APPROVED BY GOD. JABEZ MAKES THIS FACT VERY CLEAR. HE WAS A BRIGHT SPOT IN A DARK WORLD.

II. HIS PRAYER - v. 10

BEFORE LOOKING AT THE FOUR-FOLD PETITION IN JABEZ' PRAYER NOTICE THE NAME GIVEN TO GOD AS THE HEARER OF THIS PRAYER. GOD IS CALLED "THE GOD OF ISRAEL." THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE GOD TO WHOM JABEZ PRAYED IS A GOD WHO CHANGES MEN AND THINGS. JABEZ' PRAYER WAS NOT TO SOME PAGAN IDOL OR SOME POWERLESS DEITY BUT TO THE GOD WHO CHANGES THE LIVES OF MEN AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES AROUND THEM AS HE DID IN THE LIFE OF JACOB.

A. A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL BLESSING - "O THAT THOU WOULDST BLESS ME INDEED"

THE WORD FOR BLESSING IN THE VERSE IS THE HEBREW "BARAKEH" AND HAS BEEN A COMMON NAME FOR CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD. IF THERE IS ANYTHING A CHURCH NEEDS FROM GOD IT IS HIS BLESSING. JABEZ KNEW THE VALUE OF GOD'S BLESSING IN HIS LIFE. MEN KNOW THE VALUE OF WEALTH, FAVOR, HEALTH AND POWER BUT RELATIVELY FEW UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF GOD'S BLESSINGS. THE USAGE OF THE WORD "INDEED" SUGGESTS THAT THIS DESIRE WAS MORE THAN A CASUAL COMMENT ON THE PART OF JABEZ. JABEZ WAS INVITING GOD INTO HIS LIFE AND MORE, HE RECOGNIZED HE REALLY NEEDED GOD IN HIS LIFE. MANY BELIEVERS WOULD ENJOY HAVING GOD'S BLESSING (1) IT COST US NOTHING IN TERMS OF TRIAL, SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE. (2) IT REQUIRED NO SPECIAL EFFORT ON OUR PART. THE SPIRITUAL MAN IS KEENLY AWARE THAT LIVING IS FAR MORE THAN THE ACCUMULATION OF THINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS. ABUNDANT LIVING COMES THROUGH A VITAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD DOING HIS WILL AND SEEKING HIS FAVOR. QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU AND I NEED THIS MORNING MORE THAN GOD'S BLESSING IN OUR LIVES? "SOLOMON SAID IT WELL: 'THE BLESSING OF THE LORD IT MAKETH RICH AND HE ADDETH NO SORROW WITH IT." (PROVERBS 10:22)

B. A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH - "ENLARGE MY COASTS."

THERE IS SUCH A THING AS WRONG AMBITION BUT THERE IS ALSO THE DANGER OF HAVING NO AMBITION.

IN A WORLD OF "SPIRITUAL FREELoadERS" WHERE PEOPLE ATTEMPT TO DO AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE, JABEZ WAS A MAN WHO WAS ASKING GOD FOR GREATER OPPORTUNITY AND GREATER RESPONSIBILITY FULLY AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THIS WOULD BRING GREATER OPPOSITION FROM SATAN. JABEZ WAS A MAN WHO WAS SPIRITUALLY AMBITIOUS. HE THOUGHT IN BIG TERMS OF ENLARGED BORDERS, GREATER OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE GOD AND BRING GLORY TO HIS NAME. MANY OF US ARE TOO EASILY SATISFIED CONCERNING SPIRITUAL MATTERS. IF WE HAVE ONE ANSWER TO PRAYER EVERY 5 YEARS, THAT IS ENOUGH. ONE BLESSING A YEAR WILL DO, BUT WITH JABEZ HIS MOTIVE WAS UNSELFISH AND HIS DESIRE WAS THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD. WE MAY MEASURE OR TAKE OUR SPIRITUAL PULSE BY EXAMINING THIS IDEA. THERE ARE SOME BELIEVERS WHO ARE ALWAYS IN TROUBLE AND ALWAYS IN NEED OF HELP OR COUNSEL OF SOME KIND. IF A PERSON HAS BEEN SAVED FOR A WHILE AND IS ALWAYS NEEDING ADVICE AND HELP IT IS A SIGN OF SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY AND SPIRITUAL INFANCY. A PERSON HAS BEGUN TO GROW WHO NO LONGER WANTS TO BE HELPED BUT INDEED WANTS TO BE A HELPER OF OTHERS AND OF GOD. JABEZ WANTED TO BE A HELPER AND TO DO SOMETHING FOR GOD'S GLORY. OUR CHURCHES TODAY ARE FILLED WITH BELIEVERS WHO CARRY OR BEAR THE SURVIVAL SYNDROME THAT IS THEY WALK AROUND ON SPIRITUAL CRUTCHES. THE IDEA OF HELPING SOMEONE ELSE OR DOING SOMETHING FOR GOD UNSELFISHLY NEVER ENTERS THEIR MIND. THEY THINK ONLY IN TERMS OF HOW THEY MAY GET ALONG, WHAT THEY MAY ACCOMPLISH FOR THEMSELVES OR THEIR FAMILY. (THIS IDEA IS OFTEN REFLECTED IN THE ATTITUDE OF NEW PEOPLE IN A CHURCH. THERE ARE BASICALLY TWO KINDS, THOSE WHO WANT TO BE SERVED AND THOSE WHO WANT TO SERVE.) IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY SURVIVAL OR SERVICE. SANDERS SAYS OF JABEZ "GOD IS LOOKING FOR MEN WHO, LIKE JABEZ ARE DISCONTENTED WITH A LIMITED OPPORTUNITY WHEN THEY COULD BRING GREATER GLORY TO GOD IN A WIDER SPHERE."

C. A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION - "THINE HAND WITH ME."

JABEZ KNEW THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO ACCOMPLISH SPIRITUAL GOALS IN THE FLESH AND APART FROM GOD'S DIRECTION, GUIDANCE AND ENABLEMENT. WHEN THE HAND OF GOD RESTS UPON A MAN, HE TURNS A ROD IN THE HAND OF MOSES INTO A ROD OF POWER. THE JAWBONE OF AN ASS IN THE HAND OF SAMSON, TO A MIGHTY WEAPON. OUR MEAGER RESULTS IN THE LORD'S

WORK ARE OFTEN BASED UPON OUR ABILITY, OUR DECISIONS, AND NOT HIS. "AND THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH THEM; AND A GREAT NUMBER BELIEVED AND TURNED UNTO THE LORD." (ACTS 11:21)

MOST BELIEVERS ATTEST TO THEIR DESIRE TO AT LEAST KNOW THE WILL OF GOD IN THEIR LIVES. HOWEVER, WHEN IT COMES TO GOD'S 2: DIRECTION THERE ARE SOME IMPROPER ATTITUDES:

(1) PRESUMPTION - SOME CHRISTIANS ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT THEY KNOW BETTER HOW TO RUN THEIR LIVES THAN GOD KNOWS. GOD, IN THEIR THINKING, IS FOR THE BIG EMERGENCY, THE DESPERATE SITUATION WHERE THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO OTHER PLACE TO TURN, THEN WE INVITE GOD IN TO SALVAGE THE WRECK. (RELATE TO PEOPLE WHO ONLY SHOW UP IN CHURCH IN TIME OF ILLNESS, MARITAL TROUBLE, AND THINGS OF THAT NATURE. WHEN THE CRISIS IS OVER THEY ARE GONE-UNTIL THE NEXT CRISIS.)

(2) PARALYSIS - THESE PEOPLE ARE AFRAID THE WILL OF GOD AND THE DIRECTION OF GOD WOULD ASK THEM TO DO SOMETHING THAT IS HARD OR ABSURD. THEY FEAR THAT GOD'S PLAN WILL UPSET THEIR PLANS AND THAT IN SOME WAY GOD'S PLAN IS DESIGNED TO HURT THEM AND TO CREATE THE GREATEST POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES. THIS IS SATAN'S DECEPTION. THE GOD PLANNED LIFE IS THE ONLY LIFE FOR A CHRISTIAN THAT IS WORTH LIVING.

D. A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL PROTECTION - "AND THAT THOU WOULDST KEEP ME FROM EVIL...."

JABEZ KNEW THAT WITH GREATER RESPONSIBILITY COMES GREATER ADVERSITY. SPIRITUALLY MINDED PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT WHEN ONE MOVES INTO LARGER AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY HE MAY EXPECT OPPOSITION FROM SATAN. JABEZ' CONCERN WAS THAT SATAN MIGHT ATTEMPT TO SIDETRACK HIM FROM THE SPIRITUAL GOALS WHICH HE HAD SET IN LIFE. (THE EVANGELICAL WORLD IS FILLED WITH PEOPLE WHO IN THEIR YOUTH HAD HIGH PURPOSE AND SPIRITUAL GOALS AS THE OBJECT OF THEIR LIVES. BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE THEY HAVE BEEN SIDETRACKED FOR SOMETHING ELSE.) THE WORD EVIL IN THE TEXT SUGGESTS RUIN OR DECAY. IT REVEALS THAT JABEZ KNEW THE FRAILTY OF HIS OWN DISPOSITION. EVIL CAN AND DOES RUIN US IF WE DO NOT FLEE TO GOD FOR PROTECTION. JABEZ PRAYED FOR SPECIFIC NEEDS IN HIS LIFE AND GOD HEARD HIS PRAYER.

D. A.K.

Cor. 16

Fox Hunt
Rabbit
Trails!

III. HIS PROSPERITY - v. 10

THE TEXT SAYS JABEZ CALLED... GOD GRANTED. THIS PRAYER IS A BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE FACT THAT GOD ANSWERS PRAYER. IT IS MY FIRM CONVICTION THAT GOD WILL ANSWER AND HEED THE PRAYERS OF THOSE WHOSE AMBITION IS TOTALLY FOR THE GLORY OF GOD IN CHRIST. HAVE YOU EVER STOPPED FOR A MOMENT AND ASKED YOURSELF THIS QUESTION: "WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME GOD ANSWERED ONE OF MY PRAYERS?" IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY THINKING OF SPECIFIC ANSWER THEN TWO PROBLEMS MAY BE INVOLVED. (1) YOU DIDN'T ASK FOR ANYTHING - (JAMES 4:2 "YE HAVE NOT BECAUSE YE ASK NOT") (2) WE ASK IMPROPERLY OR FOR THE WRONG REASON (JAMES 4:3 - "YE ASK, AND RECEIVE NOT, BECAUSE YE ASK AMISS") THE WORD AMISS MEANS "FOR EVIL." MUCH OF OUR ASKING IS FOR OUR OWN PLEASURE, FOR OUR OWN INTERESTS AND SELDOM FOR THE GLORY OF GOD ALONE. WE, LIKE JABEZ, NEED TO MAKE THE SERVICE OF GOD AND HIS GLORY THE SUPREME END OF OUR LIVES AND TO MAKE OUR DESIRES CONFORM TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S PROMPTINGS IN SUCH A WAY THAT GOD CAN ANSWER OUR PRAYERS BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY MOTIVATED. JABEZ WAS SUCH A MAN AND FROM HIS LIFE WE MAY PROFIT. MANY OF US BELIEVE OUR MOTIVE TO BE PURE BUT MUCH OF OUR PRAYING IS FOR PERSONAL GAIN. WE WANT MORE OF SOMETHING, A BIGGER OR BETTER SOME- THING, WE WANT A LOVED ONE SAVED SO OUR LIVES WILL BE EASIER. WE WANT THINGS TO HAPPEN THAT WE MAY HAVE A BETTER LOT IN LIFE. BUT FOR THE MAN WHOSE SOLE AMBITION IS GOD'S GLORY AND THE WORK OF GOD ON EARTH, PRAYING IN THE WILL OF GOD WILL BRING GOD'S ANSWER.

UNDER DAVID'S BANNER*Revised
Sept. 1987*

I CHRONICLES 12

DAVID IS REMEMBERED PRIMARILY FOR TWO ASPECTS OF HIS LIFE: (1) HIS SPIRITUALITY - HE WAS KNOWN AS THE SWEET SINGER OF ISRAEL, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART, WRITER OF SUCH LITERATURE AS PSALMS 23.

(2) HIS SENSUALITY - THIS WAS DAVID'S BESETTING SIN. EARLY IN HIS CAREER WE DISCOVERED DAVID WAS A VERY HANDSOME MAN AND WOMEN WERE ATTRACTED TO HIM. THIS FACT LED TO THE MOST SORROWFUL EXPERIENCE IN HIS LIFE IN THE SIN RECORDED IN II SAM. 11. HOWEVER, DAVID WAS A MAN OF OUTSTANDING QUALITIES. HE KNEW HOW TO BE A FRIEND. (JONATHAN) HE WAS COURAGEOUS AND VALIANT. (GOLIATH) HE WAS AN OUTSTANDING LEADER AND THE CHAPTER BEFORE US SHOWS HOW ABLE DAVID LED MEN. THE MEN WHO GATHERED ABOUT DAVID AT ZIKLAG WERE UNEQUALLED IN HISTORY AS A MOBILE FIGHTING FORCE. "NEVER BEFORE OR SINCE HAVE MORE HEROES AND CHAMPIONS BEEN FOUND IN A BAND OF 400, RAPIDLY RECRUITED TO 6." AS IS QUITE NATURAL, SOME OF THEM ARE BOTH DESPERATE AND EVIL CHARACTERS. THEY HARBORED IN CAVES OR SLEEP UNDER ROCKS AND FROM THE MOUNTAINTOPS, LIKE EAGLES IN THEIR EYRIES, SURVEY ALL THE MOUNTAIN PASSES, READY TO SWOOP DOWN ON THEIR PHILISTINE PREY OR TO MAKE TIMELY ESCAPE FROM SAUL'S FORCES, WHICH THEY WILL NOT FIGHT FOR DAVID'S LOYALTY." (B.H. CARROLL) TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, THE CHAPTER BEFORE US LISTS THE TRIBES AND FAMILIES OF THE VARIOUS MEN WHO JOINED THEMSELVES TO DAVID WHILE HE WAS FLEEING FROM SAUL, FIGHTING THE PHILISTINES, AND AWAITING GOD'S TIME TO TAKE THE THRONE OF THE NATION. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE HOW OFTEN GOD NESTLES TRUTH IN UNEXPECTED PLACES. FOR EXAMPLE, GEN. 5 IS BASICALLY A ROLL CALL OF PEOPLE WHO LIVED AND DIED CULMINATING WITH METHUSELAH THE MAN WHO LIVED 969 YEARS. HOWEVER, IN THAT LONG LIST OR GENEALOGY WE ARE INTRODUCED TO A MAN NAMED ENOCH, OF WHOM IT SAYS "AND ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD AND WAS NOT, FOR GOD TOOK HIM." (GEN. 5:24) THE SAME IS TRUE IN THE CHRONOLOGY OF I CHRON. 4 WHICH BEGINS WITH A LONG, DULL LIST OF THE SONS OF JUDAH. HOWEVER, IN V. 9 WE ARE INTRODUCED TO JABEZ, WHO WAS MORE HONORABLE THAN HIS BRETHREN; AND HIS MOTHER CALLED HIS NAME JABEZ, SAYING, BECAUSE I

BARE HIM WITH SORROW. AND JABEZ CALLED ON THE GOD OF ISRAEL, SAYING, O THAT THOU WOULDST BLESS ME INDEED, AND ENLARGE MY COASTS, AND THAT THINE HAND MIGHT BE WITH ME, AND THAT THOU WOULDST KEEP ME FROM EVIL, THAT IT MAY NOT GRIEVE THEE! AND GOD GRANTED HIM THAT WHICH HE REQUESTED." THIS IS A REMARKABLE STATEMENT ABOUT A MAN WHO SUDDENLY APPEARS IN THE GENEALOGICAL CHAPTER THAT SAYS VERY LITTLE ELSE OTHER THAN LIST THE NAMES OF MANY PEOPLE. DAVID MADE ZIHLAG HIS HEADQUARTERS FOR 16 MONTHS UNTIL SAUL DIED. THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD OF TIME HE WAS ACCUMULATING TROOPS AND PREPARING A CRACK FORCE OF MEN WHO WOULD BE LOYAL TO HIM AND TO THE NATION WHEN HE BECAME KING. THE SURPRISING PART OF THIS CHAPTER IS THAT IN I SAM. 22:2 THESE MEN WHO JOINED DAVID EARLIER IN THE CAVE OF ADULLAM WERE CHARACTERIZED AS MEN IN DISTRESS, DEBT AND DISCONTENTED. NOT EXACTLY THE KIND OF UPSTANDING CITIZENS ONE WOULD SEEK OUT TO DEFEND THE NATION AGAINST HOSTILE FORCES. WE WOULD PROBABLY CHARACTERIZE THE MEN WHO RALLIED TO DAVID AS A MOTLEY CREW OF ROGUES WITH NOT VERY GOOD CREDENTIALS FOR SOLDIERS. HOWEVER, NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. AS A BASIS FOR OUR STUDY, LET US LOOK AT THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE MEN AND APPLY THOSE CHARACTERISTICS TO CHRISTIANS.

I. THE MEN UNDER DAVID'S BANNER WERE DILIGENT -v1-2

THE FIRST CHARACTERISTIC OF THESE MEN IS:

A. THEY WERE AVAILABLE - v. 1

"THEY CAME TO DAVID" SOMEONE HAS SAID THE TWO GREATEST ABILITIES ARE AVAILABILITY AND DEPENDABILITY. THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO SAY THEY WANT TO SERVE THE LORD AND ARE WILLING TO DO SO BUT NEVER PUT THEMSELVES IN PLACE WHERE GOD MAY USE THEM. I LIKE THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BLACK BROTHER WHO SAID HE SIMPLY PUT HIMSELF IN NEUTRAL AND THE LORD COULD DIRECT HIM ANYWHERE HE DESIRED. THE TESTIMONY OF ABRAHAM'S SERVANT IN GEN. 24:27 WAS "I BEING IN THE WAY, THE LORD LED ME..." OR IN THE WORDS OF ISAIAH "HERE AM I; SEND ME." (Is. 6:8)

B. THEY WERE ARMED - v. 2

WHEN THEY JOINED DAVID THEY DID NOT COME EMPTY HANDED

BUT WERE READY FOR COMBAT. THEY HAD THEIR WEAPONS WITH THEM. THEY WERE BOWMEN, MEN WHO USED THE SLING. THEY WERE READY AND PREPARED TO DO BATTLE. ("THOU THEREFORE ENDURE HARDNESS AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST. NO MAN THAT WARRETH ENTANGLETH HIMSELF WITH THE CARES OF THIS LIFE; THAT HE MAY PLEASE HIM WHO HATH CHOSEN HIM TO BE A SOLDIER." (II TIM. 2:3-4)) MANY OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE NEVER READY TO DO COMBAT WITH THE ENEMY. MANY OF THE SAINTS ARE IN THE HOSPITAL SO MUCH THAT THEY ARE NEVER READY FOR THE BATTLEFIELD.

C. THEY WERE AMBIDEXTROUS - v.2

Comment re Staff.
 "BOTH THE RIGHT HAND AND THE LEFT...." THESE MEN WERE TO COMBAT WHAT A SWITCH-HITTER IS TO BASEBALL. THIS SUGGESTS BOTH DEDICATION AND SKILL. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN ONE SHOULD HAVE A SINGLE GOAL OR PURPOSE IN LIFE: "THIS ONE THING I DO." THE LORD'S WORK IS BECOMING AN AREA OF SPECIALIZATION TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT CHRISTIAN WORKERS ARE DIFFICULT TO FIND. // RELATE SITUATION OF INTERVIEWS WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT \$15 - \$20 THOUSAND DOLLARS A YEAR TO DO ONE JOB, EITHER WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, LEAD A CHOIR, WORK ON BUSES, BUT NOT MORE THAN ONE SINGLE MINISTRY. THE FACT THAT THESE MEN COULD USE BOTH HANDS SUGGESTS THAT GOOD WORKERS NEED ADEQUATE TOOLS AND A WILLINGNESS TO USE THEM. NEEDLESS TO SAY OUR GREATEST ASSET IN COMBAT IS A GRASP OF BIBLE AND A DEPENDENCE UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT IN USING THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT. I'M IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT THESE MEN WERE WILLING TO USE BOTH HANDS IN DAVID'S SERVICE. IN THE LORD'S WORK THERE ARE MANY WHO WILL USE THE TONGUE TO CRITICIZE AND LEND COUNSEL OUT OF THE VAST INEXPERIENCE. THERE ARE MANY WHO WILL USE THEIR EYES TO SEE WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE AND WHY DOESN'T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS OR THAT. BUT WILLING HANDS TO DO A HARD JOB ARE RARE. EVERYBODY KNOWS WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE IN THE LORD'S WORK AND HOW TO TELL SOMEONE ELSE TO DO IT, BUT THERE ARE NOT MANY AMBIDEXTROUS PEOPLE AVAILABLE. *I Diligent*

II. THE MEN UNDER DAVID'S BANNER WERE DISCIPLINED - v. 8, 33, 38

THE FIRST NOTABLE CHARACTERISTIC BY WAY OF DISCIPLINE WAS:

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EXILE
Sake

For David's
without the
Camp

accepted the difficulties
inconvenience - Kghm
sake

A. THEY WERE SEPARATED - v. 8

"SEPARATED THEMSELVES UNTO DAVID." THE V. ALSO SUGGESTS THIS SEPARATION CARRIED WITH IT FITNESS FOR BATTLE, INVOLVING ABILITY WITH WEAPONS AND MENTAL ATTITUDE. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS TRAINING FOR COMBAT APART FROM SEPARATION FROM DISTRACTING INFLUENCES. THE ARMY RECOGNIZES THIS FACT WITH A BOOT CAMP PROGRAM. PAUL REMINDED TIMOTHY IN II TIM. THAT THE GOOD SOLDIER DOES NOT BECOME ENTANGLED WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THIS WORLD. WHEN THE OCCASION FOR BATTLE AROSE, THESE MEN WERE PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY FIT FOR COMBAT. THEY HAD BEEN WITH DAVID, KNEW HIS HEART AND DESIRES. DO I NEED TO SAY MUCH ABOUT THE POOR SPIRITUAL FITNESS OF MANY BELIEVERS? A BACKSLIDDEN CHRISTIAN WHO IS OUT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD IS NOT ONLY NOT INTERESTED IN EVANGELISM BUT UNABLE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN EVANGELISM. GOD USES SEPARATED CHRISTIANS TO BRING HONOR TO HIS NAME. THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR MUST DETERMINE WHETHER HE INTENDS TO FIGHT FOR THE LORD OR INDULGE HIMSELF AT THE DEVIL'S DAINTY TABLE.

B. THEY WERE SINGLE-MINDED - v. 33

THESE MEN WERE WITH DAVID BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO SERVE HIM. THEY WERE NOT DAVID'S SOLDIERS ON THE WEEKEND AND THEIR OWN MEN THE REST OF THE WEEK. THEY DID NOT SET ASIDE AN HOUR FOR DAVID AND THE REST OF THE TIME FOR THEMSELVES. THEY WERE NOT OF A DOUBLE HEART. THE WORD OF GOD ENCOURAGES THE BELIEVER TO SET HIS EYE ON THE SINGLE PURPOSE OF SERVING THE LORD ACCEPTABLY AND LETTING NOTHING INTERFERE WITH THAT DEDICATION. PAUL SAID "THIS ONE THING I DO." WE CANNOT FACE TWO DIRECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME, LET ALONE TRAVEL IN BOTH DIRECTIONS. DAVID'S MEN KNEW THEY WERE ALIGNED WITH HIM. NO OTHER KING, NO OTHER ARMY COULD ENTICE THEM TO SERVE.

C. THEY WERE STRICT - v. 38

"COULD KEEP THE RANK." (RELATE STORY IN RECENT PAPER CONCERNING A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE IN AFRICA AND HIS COMMENT ABOUT AMERICAN SPECIAL FORCES AND THE FAILURE TO TRAIN SOLDIERS AS WE SHOULD.) THESE MEN WERE ORDERLY IN THEIR MILITARY LIFE. "NOW WE EXHORT YOU BRETHREN, WARN THEM THAT ARE UNRULY...." (I THESS. 5:14) THE WORD UNRULY MEANS "OUT OF RANK OR OUT OF

ORDER, MARCHING OUT OF STEP." THESE MEN ROSE UP AS ONE MAN WALKING IN STEP, MOVING IN A SINGLE PURPOSE TO SERVE DAVID. THEIR EFFECTIVENESS WOULD HAVE BEEN SHATTERED IF EVERY MAN HAD GONE OUT IN THEIR OWN DIRECTION, SEEKING HIS OWN INTEREST RATHER THAN SUPPRESSING HIS PERSONAL INTEREST FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF THEIR ONE CAUSE. IT IS AMAZING THAT IN MANY CHURCHES THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ONLY OUT OF STEP BUT OUT OF HARMONY WITH ABOUT EVERYTHING IN THE CHURCH. THEY HAVE NEVER DONE ANYTHING IN HARMONY WITH ANYONE ELSE. NO WORK EVER WENT FORWARD WITH EVERY MAN DOING AS HE PLEASES, GOING HIS OWN WAY, EXPRESSING HIS OWN SELF INTEREST AND SELF WILL, WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THE REST OF THE PUBLIC. I HEARD JACK HYLES SAY ONE TIME "BRETHREN, LET US STAND BACK TO BACK, LOOK ONE ANOTHER IN THE EYE, PUT OUR EAR TO THE GROUND, NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE, AND MOVE FORWARD FOR THE LORD." THIS SOUNDS GREAT BUT DID YOU EVER TRY TO WORK IN THAT POSITION! *J.D.L. sent its Discipline*

III. THE MEN UNDER DAVID'S BANNER WERE DARING-v.15

THEY DID NOT LET A SMALL THING LIKE A FLOOD KEEP THEM FROM JOINING DAVID! PERSONAL DANGER DID NOT ENTER THEIR MINDS WHEN THEY THOUGHT OF THE JOB TO BE DONE. THESE MEN WERE NOT UNTHINKING MEN, BUT THEY WERE WILLING TO VENTURE SOMETHING FOR THEIR KING. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT EVEN THE TURTLE WHEN HE WANTS TO GET AHEAD MUST STICK OUT HIS NECK! THERE WAS A KIND OF AGGRESSIVE NESS ABOUT THESE MEN WHICH DID NOT LET THEM SIT AROUND WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN. THEY TOOK THE INITIATIVE. (THEIR DARING WAS DEMONSTRATED BY THE RAID ON THE WELL AT JERUSALEM.) NO MAN EVER ACHIEVED GREATNESS BY PLAYING IT SAFE ALL THE TIME. *(CHKON. 11:17.)*

IV. THE MEN UNDER DAVID'S BANNER WERE DEVOTED-v.18

IRA - arm bands / H. Strike. "THINE ARE WE DAVID, AND ON THY SIDE" DAVID NEVER WONDERED ABOUT THE LOYALTY AND ALLEGIANCE OF THESE MEN. HE COULD COUNT ON THEM AND DID NOT HAVE TO WATCH HIS BACK WHEN THE ENEMY APPEARED IN COMBAT. NOTHING IS WORSE THAN HALFHEARTED INTEREST AND LOYALTY. I DON'T MEAN TO BEAT A DEAD HORSE TO DEATH, BUT EVERY PERSON SHOULD BE LOYAL FIRST OF ALL TO JESUS CHRIST, AND THEN TO HIS LOCAL CHURCH. IF YOU CAN'T BE LOYAL TO THE CHURCH WHERE YOU ATTEND *- Can't tell sometimes!*

- (1) Grace = A symbol of Loyalty
- (2) Social Pressures = Drink & Die - Loose
- (3) Work - Sects / lose jobs - Rel. conviction *[Conform to moral conflict?]*
- (4) Church - True to Him -

AND WORSHIP GOD THEN BE HONEST ENOUGH TO FIND ONE WHERE YOU CAN BE LOYAL AND GET IN IT, ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND DO SOMETHING FOR JESUS CHRIST. DON'T GO TO THE SERVICE HALF THE TIME, GIVE HALF OF WHAT YOU COULD, SPEND HALF OF THE EFFORT THAT IS NECESSARY TO DO SOMETHING FOR GOD. BE LOYAL IF YOUR CHURCH IS WORTHY OF YOUR LOYALTY.

I Diligent II Disciplined
III Devoted IV Deceitful

V. THE MEN UNDER DAVID'S BANNER WERE DISCERNING -v32

"HAD UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES." THESE MEN KNEW SOMETHING OF THE TIMES AND CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THEY WERE DOING COMBAT. THEY KNEW AND BELIEVED THAT DAVID WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE THRONE OF ISRAEL. THEY KNEW THE SCORE. IF EVER THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST, NEEDED SOME MEN OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT IT IS NOW. WE ARE LIVING IN A TIME OF THEOLOGICAL FOG. WE HEAR TERMS LIKE NEO-ORTHODOXY, NEO-EVANGELICALISM, NEOPENTECOSTALISM, CHARISMATIC, FUNDAMENTALISM, AND MANY OF US DON'T HAVE THE FAINTEST IDEA OF WHAT THESE TERMS MEAN. WE ARE LIVING IN TIMES WHEN THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE BEING SWEEPED AWAY BY DECEPTION OF EVERY KIND. THERE IS VERY LITTLE SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT. PEOPLE ARE GULLIBLE WHEN IT COMES TO MUSIC AND MESSAGE. THEY WILL SUPPORT ANYTHING THAT HAS A BEAT AND A TEAR. I HAVE BEEN MADE AWARE OF THE FACT RECENTLY THAT EVANGELICALS ARE BEING DECEIVED ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. I REJOICE WHEN CATHOLICS GET SAVED BUT THE CHURCH HAS NOT CHANGED ITS BASIC APPROACH OF WORKS FOR SALVATION! WE TEND TO FORGET THAT. I HEAR THE PHRASE "OUR ROMAN CATHOLIC BROTHERS" A LITTLE TOO OFTEN TO SUIT ME! WE NEED TO PRAY AS A CHURCH THAT GOD WILL GIVE THE LEADERSHIP OF THIS CHURCH DISCERNMENT CONCERNING THE TIMES.

(article Newsweek - May 23, 1977)

Puncher played - nothing.

MEN WHOM GOD STRUCK DEAD

The subject today may disturb some. Critics of the Bible and enemies of the Christian faith have fastened upon what they call moral difficulties in the Old Testament which seem to ascribe to God deeds which our sense of conscience and morals describe as improper. These critics have called the God of the Old Testament barbaric, cruel, and vindictive. Cases in point are the extermination of the Canaanites and the Amalikites. In the case of the Canaanites, God commanded Joshua in Deuteronomy 20:16-18 annihilate these people. The Canaanite tribes had for years inflicted their shameless vices upon their neighbors. They had trampled underfoot all laws of decency and justice. Their shameless immorality had caused the nation to plunge so deeply into idolatry and sin that there was only one cure for such gross sin and that was the surgical removal of the entire race. Only God could make such a wide-sweeping judgment, and He did. One dreadful aspect of sin is that it produces wide-spread effects which draws men, women and children down in the wake of destruction. It would be better for the children of the Canaanites to perish in their infancy than to grow up as devotees of idolatry and sin. "When men and their families board a ship and sail out on the ocean for a pleasure trip, and then make that ship a place of sin, wickedness and vice and if they should suddenly perish because of their own sinfulness, who is to blame? Would you accuse God for not discriminating between adults and children?" In the case of the Amalikites, we are talking about a bandit race, who for hundreds of years had run over weaker nations, slaughtering, raping, torturing, and pillaging for the sheer delight of destruction. They scoffed at religion and worshiped only the god of strength. For 500 years, they had left a trail of blood and wreckage behind them. Their wars were one of ambush against weak, the aged, and the helpless. They tortured their captives by hacking off their limbs, knocking out their teeth, and gouging out their eyes. They burned and destroyed cities for the sheer delight of watching them burn and they jeered at the God of Israel. The survival of Israel was at stake when God commanded Saul to judicially remove this nation from Israel's borders. I frankly do not know anyone who is capable of saying that God was immoral in such judicial activity. The national safety of Israel was at stake in several instances. The seed of the Messiah, the Bible, and the blessing of future nations was hanging in the balance. It was just in such a special set of circumstances that we have the three references mentioned in our study today.

Paid Not Attention To God's Word.

I. THE MAN WHO IGNORED GOD'S CLEAR COMMAND - I Chron. 13:10

This chapter in Chronicles has to do with that period when David moved from military chieftan to king. In the first 10 verses of this chapter, the Ark of God is mentioned no less than five times. During the time of Saul's reign, the Ark had been neglected. For 20 years it had been at a place called Kirjath-Jearim. Saul had not been interested in the Ark at all. The Ark was a box that contained the tables of the Law. The top of the Ark was gold-plated and called the Mercy Seat. The Ark symbolized the presence of God among His people. It preceded the people when they broke camp and was carried by David into battle, and ultimately placed in Solomon's temple as a perpetual reminder of God's presence among His people. It had its origin with Moses at the time of the exodus and, at one time, was captured by the Philistines and ultimately disappeared after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. In Biblical typology, the Ark was a type of Christ.

When David became king, it was his desire to transfer the Ark to Jerusalem in order to focus attention upon that city as the center of national worship. The transfer to Jerusalem was a time of general assembly of the nation and they were in a festive mood. The responsibility for moving the Ark fell to the sons of Abinadab who were named Uzza and Ahio. The incident which caused Uzza's death at first sight seems to be a terribly severe penalty for a very innocent and casual deed. However, this is not the case. In Numbers 4:15, God gave specific instructions concerning the vessels of the sanctuary. They were not to be touched without proper authorization. The penalty for doing so was death. For example, if an intelligent person climbed over a fence which was marked "warning high voltage" and somehow through prowling around touched a high tension wire, we would look upon him as a very foolish person. Apply this principle to the God of the Bible. These men knew the teaching of the law concerning the Ark. Yet, in spite of the clear commandment of God, they violated this warning. Uzza represents a class of people who ignore divine revelation and resort to natural reason and wisdom in spiritual matters. They may be sincere and well-meaning people, but the problem is they disregard God's word! I think the loss of spiritual instruction and concern during the days of Saul may have lead to this atmosphere of neglect and carelessness in spiritual matters. Please remember that this man was a Levite instructed, well-taught in the law, and knew the penalties of the violation of the law. This man speaks to all generations of those nice people who think they can presume to know what is best rather than accepting divine revelation. The religious world is filled with Uzzas today. For example, the Bible teaches clearly

2 Chron. 24:16

Take note
"accused to pattern"

music - Allen Blain
Pygmy River

that apart from the principle of the blood of Christ, it is not possible for men to be saved. (Compare Ephesians 1:7, Rev. 1:5, Hebrews 9:22. Of the clear and simple and teaching of the Word of God some men still deny that salvation is by the blood of Christ. They, like Cain, persist in approaching God upon the basis of their own worthiness rather than thru the blood. They want to approach God on the basis of personal worth and not by God's way, that is by faith. The religious world today is dominated by men like Uzza, who pay little or no attention to divine revelation in the matters of the soul. Question - Is this a serious matter? It is if you believe the eternal well being of a man's soul is important! God struck Uzza dead that other men might learn the importance of heeding the Word of God!

Read not attend unto G-d's word.

II. THE MEN WHO IGNORED DOING GOD'S WORK IN GOD'S WAY - Leviticus 10:2 (Savage comment)

Nadab and Abihu were consecrated to the priesthood following the erection of the tabernacle and the special ceremonies lasted seven days. On the eighth day they were allowed to perform their priestly duties. It was on this eighth day that they violated God's clear command. As in the case of Uzza, these two were not innocent victims of a hostile God. Their's was the willful transgression of two men who knew better! Verse 3 follows thru with the theme of Leviticus which is 'holiness'. Men who acted for God in priestly function were required to live holy lives in conformity to God's clear direction in His word. In the office of the priest, God left no room for man to introduce his own ideas with reference to the work of a priesthood. It was to be carried out according to God's clear plan. Their sin may have involved several infraction of the law, such as: what they did was to be performed by the high priest alone on the day of atonement. This was a critical point in Israel's history when the people needed to learn the importance of living as God commanded. They had no right into the holy of holies. Too, according to verse 9, we might surmise this strong prohibition concerning drink immediately following this judgment would indicate that these two proceeded to their priestly function in an intoxicated state. God would not permit such moral failure in the priesthood. In our worship and service to God, He does not permit us to enter His presence in whatever way we desire. He has designed a way thru His dear Son and there is no other approach to God. If men are going to worship the God of the Bible, they will do so in holiness and according to His

hells
thru the
preacher
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still
Pratt

1. high priest alone on the day of atonement. This was a critical point in Israel's history when the people needed to learn the importance of living as God commanded. They had no right into the holy of holies.
2. this strong prohibition concerning drink immediately following this judgment would indicate that these two proceeded to their priestly function in an intoxicated state. God would not permit such moral failure in the priesthood. In our worship and service to God, He does not permit us to enter His presence in whatever way we desire. He has designed a way thru His dear Son and there is no other approach to God. If men are going to worship the God of the Bible, they will do so in holiness and according to His

Life.
Quon

Dr. Benfield

Vox Pop

direction or not at all. Nadab and Abihu lacked a proper attitude toward worship at work. God will not permit a worship of men's devising but instead requires that they do as He specifies. When it comes to the work of God, no man dare presume in spiritual matters. Those who do not worship and serve according to God's clear direction are subject to His judgment. For some, that judgment may not be as immediate as Nadab and Abihu but it is inevitable. Also, please note that there is nothing mentioned in this punishment concerning eternal loss and the condition of their soul. It had to do primarily with their service to God. The Bible abounds with information concerning such dangers. (I Cor. 11:30, I John 5:16 - Both of these verses teach a Christian principle of death as a form of punishment for certain sins.) These two men who occupied a privileged position were dealt with promptly and drastically as an illustration and a reminder to a people who were prone to self will and disobedience that in the infancy of that nation, it was important that they learn spiritual lessons in their relationship to God.

People not attentive to God's work.

III. THE PEOPLE WHO LIED TO GOD ABOUT THEIR GENEROSITY - Acts 5:4

Ananias and Sapphira were not required to sell their land. Their sin was that they were trying to appear more generous than they really were. They were being dishonest about a supposed act of charity. They were interested in appearances. In the early infancy of the church, God moved in this way to preserve its purity and to teach the saints a lesson. These two were not the first or the last to put real estate ahead of God. They were hypocrites and pretenders. God used a severe disciplinary problem to sharpen the spiritual senses of the early church. If He acted in this fashion today, funeral directors would be the busiest and wealthiest people in the world! All of these three incidents speak in underlying principle to the same truth. Men must make a choice - God's way or man's way. Question - What about forgiveness of sins - God's way or man's way? Question - What about Christian service - God's way or man's way? Each person must make that decision. God has taken great pains to dramatize the importance of His way and not ours. (John 14:6, Acts 4:12)

Groves
highlight

Bpc.
 July 1988 P.M.
 S

"ASA"

2 CHRON. 14

MOST OF US, ARE NOT WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE HISTORICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. WE KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERS SUCH AS SAUL, SAMUEL, DAVID, AND SOLOMON. THESE BOOKS RECORD THE STORY OF MANY FASCINATING PEOPLE. (RELATE DR. LOGSDON'S DISCOVERY OF JABEZ IN I CHRON. 4) AFTER THE DEATH OF SOLOMON, THE NATION WAS DIVIDED. A KIND OF MASON-DIXON LINE DIVIDED THE COUNTRY OF ISRAEL WITH THE TEN NORTHERN TRIBES KNOWN AS ISRAEL AND THE SOUTHERN TRIBES KNOWN AS JUDAH. SOLOMON'S SERVANT NAMED JEROBOAM RULED IN THE NORTH AND SOLOMON'S SON REHOBAM RULED IN THE SOUTH. FOR THE NEXT 250 YEARS PLUS, NOT A SINGLE KING IN ISRAEL REALLY SERVED AND WORSHIPPED THE LORD AS HE SHOULD. THE LITTLE PHRASE "HE DID THAT WHICH IS EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD" IS THE RECURRING SOUND IN DESCRIBING THESE KINGS. IN THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM, AT LEAST FIVE OF THE THIRTEEN MONARCHS WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR PIETY. THE NAMES OF JEHOSEPHAT, UZZIAH, JOTHAM, AND HEZEKIAH WERE ALL MEN WITH SPIRITUAL INTERESTS, SERVING THE LORD. THE THIRD OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH WAS A MAN NAMED ASA. HE LIVED ABOUT 950 YEARS BEFORE CHRIST WAS BORN. IT IS EASY TO REMEMBER HIS NAME BECAUSE IT IS SPELLED THE SAME WAY FRONTWARDS OR BACKWARDS. IT LITERALLY MEANS "HEALER". HE WAS ONE OF THOSE LITTLE KNOWN KINGS IN JUDAH WHOSE LIFE WAS FILLED WITH PUBLIC SERVICE FOR HIS PEOPLE AND SPIRITUAL INTERESTS TOWARDS GOD. I HAD DISCOVERED ~~THE~~ KEY WORDS IN THE TEXT OF II CHRON. WHICH WE WILL USE AS PEGS UPON WHICH TO HANG OUR THOUGHTS TODAY. (5)

I. ASA WAS A MAN WHO DID WHAT WAS RIGHT - VERSE II CHRON. 14:2 (idea = "Straight")

AT FIRST GLANCE, ONE MIGHT ASK WHAT IS SO GREAT ABOUT THIS STATEMENT. ISN'T IT TRUE THAT A LOT OF MEN DO THAT WHICH IS RIGHT? THERE WERE PROBABLY FEWER MEN IN ASA'S DAY DOING THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT THAN ONE MIGHT IMAGINE. MY GUESS IS MORE PEOPLE DO WHAT IS EXPEDIENT THAN THAT WHICH IS RIGHT.

a new morality - ethic - not based on Right/Wrong - what you can get away with - don't get caught!!!!

Chapman = new question

IF SOMETHING SERVES OUR OWN PURPOSES THEN WE DO IT, WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF THE RIGHTNESS OR WRONGNESS OF THE DEED! IN OUR COUNTRY, THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT VIOLATION OF ETHICS CONCERNING THE PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, FBI AND CIA. IT IS NOT EASY TO DO RIGHT IN A SOCIETY WHERE ETHICS IS CHANGING AS RAPIDLY AS IN OUR COUNTRY. JUST A GENERATION AGO, PEOPLE LOOKED UPON DIVORCE AS DISGRACEFUL, ILLEGITIMATE BABIES AS WRONG, CHARITY AS A GOOD AND DESIRABLE ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHERS, HONEST LABOR AS A PART OF MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO LIFE. I CAN REMEMBER THE PRESIDENT OF ONE OF THE SCHOOLS I ATTENDED SAYING: "DO RIGHT, DO RIGHT TILL THE STARS FALL!" ALSO, "IT IS NEVER RIGHT TO DO WRONG IN ORDER TO DO RIGHT." THIS WAS DRILLED INTO THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF EVERY STUDENT IN THE SCHOOL. HOWEVER, THE STARTLING STATEMENT IN VERSE TWO CONCERNING ASA IS HE DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN THE EYES OF THE LORD! THAT LIMITS THE FIELD CONSIDERABLY. A PERSON MAY DO THAT WHICH IS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES AND YET THAT DEED MAY BE WRONG IN THE EYES OF THE LORD. IT IS POSSIBLE TO DECEIVE OURSELVES, AND OTHERS, BUT WE CANNOT DECEIVE GOD. ASA WAS A MAN WHO WAS NOT ONLY RIGHT WITH GOD BUT WAS RIGHT IN HIS DEEDS TO HIS FELLOW MAN. THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE WOULD INDICATE THREE AREAS IN WHICH ASA MANIFESTED HIS DESIRE TO DO WHAT WAS RIGHT AS KING.

v.2

HE WAS RIGHT ABOUT IMMORALITY. A. HE WAS RIGHT ABOUT MORAL PROBLEMS - I KINGS 15:12

IT IS ALWAYS HARD FOR A PERSON TO GUARD SOMETHING AS WRONG WHEN MANY INTELLIGENT AND GREAT PEOPLE PRACTICE THAT SIN. I HAVE BEEN AMAZED AT HOW THE ANCIENT WORLD WAS FILLED WITH HOMOSEXUALITY. WILLIAM BARKLEY IN HIS BOOK ON ETHICS SUGGESTS THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO NAME ONE OF THE GREAT GREEKS WHO DID NOT PRACTICE THIS KIND OF SIN, RANGING FROM PLATO TO SOCRATES. IT IS A FACT OF HISTORY THAT OF THE FIRST FIFTEEN ROMAN EMPERORS FOURTEEN WERE PRACTICING HOMOSEXUALS. SOCIETY LOOKED UPON THIS AS AN ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE SINCE IT WAS DONE BY THE INTELLIGENT AND THE ELITE. HOWEVER, CHRISTIANITY LABELLED THIS PRACTICE FOR WHAT IT IS - SIN! ASA RECOGNIZED THIS ACT AS SIN AND DEALT WITH IT FEARLESSLY (IT MADE NO DIFFERENCE TO HIM IF THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT PICKETED HIS PALACE!) IN MY JUDGMENT, HOMOSEXUALITY IS ONE

*Homosexual
Roman Emperors
Baptist*

* I don't know what (Falwell)
"policy" ... re says, but I wouldn't call it
an acceptable life style!

RESULT SOCIETY MUST PAY FOR APOSTASY AND MAN'S REFUSAL TO SERVE AND WORSHIP GOD. I BASE THIS ON THE RECORD OF ROMANS 1:24-27. THIS SIN, LIKE ANY OTHER SIN, IS FORGIVEABLE BUT IT SEEMS TO BE A PRACTICE THAT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE TO ABANDON - EVEN SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. ASA RESOLVED THE PROBLEM IN HIS DOMAIN.

He Did What Was Right About
B. ASA DEALT WITH THE PROBLEM OF IDOLATRY - I KINGS 15: 13-14 (*1 Chron. 15:16*) *Deut 18:6-10*

THIS GODLY KING BEGAN HIS REFORM MOVEMENT IN HIS OWN FAMILY. THE QUEEN-MOTHER WAS A "CARD CARRYING IDOLATER". NOT ONLY DID ASA DESTROY THE PLACES WHERE SHE WORSHIPPED, HE REMOVED HER FROM OFFICE AS UNFIT TO RULE. (SHAME ON YOU GRANDMA, YOU'RE OUT!) THERE WAS NO NEPOTISM WITH ASA. HE DID NOT LET HIS FAMILY DETERMINE WHAT WAS RIGHT AND WRONG. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, ANY WORSHIP APART FROM JUDAISM WAS WRONG AND HAD TO BE CORRECTED. IT WAS THE FIRST STEP IN ANY KIND OF NATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENT.

He Did What Was Right About Integrity
C. ASA RESTORED RESPECT FOR THINGS OF GOD - *Gov. Today Televis. ism*

I KINGS 15:15

ASA LET HIS PEOPLE KNOW THAT SOME THINGS IN LIFE ARE SACRED. THIS IS TERRIBLY IMPORTANT IN A SOCIETY WHERE MANY PEOPLE FEEL NOTHING IS SACRED. PAGANISM LEADS PEOPLE TO BELIEVE THAT THINGS LIKE FAMILY, CHURCH, BIBLE, LIFE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ARE ALL COMMONPLACE. SOME PEOPLE ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT ANIMALS AND PETS THAN THEY ARE ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS. IT IS WHEN WE HAVE RESPECT FOR GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD THAT WE HAVE RESPECT FOR PEOPLE. (RELATE INCIDENTS CONCERNING CHURCH PARKING LOT.) RECENTLY A SURVEY WAS TAKEN BY US NEWS & WORLD REPORT TO DETERMINE WHAT PROFESSIONS WERE HELD IN HIGH ESTEEM. AT THE TOP OF THE LIST WERE BANKERS, DOCTORS, CLERGYMEN. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LIST, NEAR THE 20 MARK, WERE POLITICIANS AND USED CARD SALESMEN. ASA WAS A MAN WHO PUT RESPECT BACK INTO POLITICS SIMPLY BECAUSE HIS MOTIVATION IN LIFE WAS TO DO THAT WHICH WAS GOOD AND RIGHT.

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THE INTEGRITY CRISIS

II. ASA WAS A MAN WHO BROUGHT REST TO THE NATION

II CHRON. 14:5-6

ASA WAS A MAN OF PEACE. HIS CONFIDENCE BEFORE GOD AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD BROUGHT PEACE AND PROSPERITY TO THE NATION. PLEASE NOTE THAT IT WAS NOT A TIME OF TOTAL DISARMAMENT, BUT ACCORDING TO VERSE 7 A TIME OF MILITARY PREPAREDNESS. IT WAS PEACE BROUGHT ABOUT BY MILITARY POWER AND A SUPREME CONFIDENCE IN GOD AND HIS ABILITY TO BRING PEACE TO PEOPLE WHO TRUST HIM. I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED WHAT HAPPENED IN AMERICA, IN WASHINGTON, IF THE PRAYER MEETING REPLACED THE COCKTAIL PARTY. I HAVE A FEELING THAT IN SUCH A SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT, GOD WOULD HONOR THIS NATION AND CONFOUND OUR ENEMIES. OUR LEADERS SEEM TO BE BLIND TO THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN GUIDING THE AFFAIRS OF STATE. NO ONE MAN OR GROUP OF MEN ARE CAPABLE OF PROVIDING ANSWERS TO THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF OUR TIMES. A GROUP OF POLITICIANS WHO ARE GOD-FEARING, PRAYING MEN AS WELL AS COMPETENT IN OTHER AREAS WOULD BE A WELCOME SIGHT TO PEOPLE OF OUR COUNTRY. IT WOULD BE GREAT TO READ THE TRANSCRIPT OF CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WHERE GOD'S NAME WAS USED IN PRAISE RATHER THAN IN PROFANITY. MORAL LEADERSHIP IS THE STRONGEST KIND OF LEADERSHIP AND THE MOST SORELY NEEDED IN OUR WORLD TODAY. (DEUT. 31:16-18)

Colson (Pete)

~~IV. ASA WAS A MAN WHO BROUGHT RENEWAL TO THE NATION~~ - II CHRON. 15:8 (Asa = 15 king = revival)

THE TERM "RENEWAL" HAS BEEN GREATLY ABUSED IN THE THEOLOGICAL WORLD. LET ME SUGGEST THAT THIS VERSE INDICATES A RETURN TO THE THINGS OF THE LORD AND A REVIVAL OF INTEREST IN THE THINGS OF GOD BY THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND. (RELATE ARTICLE BY CHARLES COLSON ENTITLED "A NEW AWAKENING") ONE OF THE GREAT VERSES ON REVIVAL IS IN THIS BOOK, CHAPTER 7 VERSE 14. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT AMONG RELIGIOUS AND SOME POLITICAL LEADERS THAT THE ONLY HOPE FOR OUR COUNTRY IS A GREAT SPIRITUAL AWAKENING. NOTHING ELSE WILL STEM THE TIDE AND THE FORCES WHICH ARE ALREADY IN MOTION IN AMERICA. (RELATE DR. SUGDEN'S GREAT SORROW CONCERNING HIS TRIP TO SCOTLAND)

7:14

Colson

"The road to revival is rocky, unpaved, uphill. But well-marked... clear" (McBee)

AND ENGLAND. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIND A PLACE TO ATTEND CHURCH ON SUNDAY TO HEAR THE BIBLE PREACHED. THIS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TRUE 100 YEARS AGO. I THINK THIS IS ONE INDICATION OF THE REASON FOR ENGLAND'S TOBACCO SLIDE DOWN TO ECONOMIC AND MORAL DISASTER.) IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED CRY FOR REVIVAL STEPHEN OLFORD POINTS OUT THE MANY IMPROVEMENTS WHICH HAVE FOLLOWED IN THE WAKE OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. THE EARLY EDUCATIONAL THRUST IN AMERICA WAS BORNE ON THE WAKE OF REVIVAL. OLFORD SUGGESTS THAT 6 OF THE FIRST 9 COLLEGES IN COLONIAL AMERICA CAME INTO BEING, BORNE OUT OF REVIVAL. HE MENTIONS THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, PRINCETON, COLUMBIA, RUTGERS, BROWN AND DARTMOUTH AS BEING THE FRUITS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING. THE FIRST RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY CAME OUT OF THE GREAT AWAKENING IN NEW ENGLAND IN THE 19TH CENTURY. THINK OF THE HUMANITARIAN BENEFITS OF THE GREAT PREACHING AND REVIVAL MOVEMENT IN AMERICA. MORAL STANDARDS WERE RAISED, DRINKING AND GAMBLING WENT DOWN. MOVEMENTS LIKE THE YMCA, RED CROSS, CHAPLAINCY IN THE ARMED FORCES, TO MENTION BUT A FEW ORGANIZATIONS HAD THEIR BEGINNINGS IN GREAT REVIVALS IN AMERICA. F. B. MEYER ONCE SAID "THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A GREAT RELIGIOUS REVIVAL WITHOUT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REFORMS." IN THIS REGARD WE MIGHT THAT THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY FOLLOWED A REVIVAL. THE END OF CHILD LABOR RESULTED FROM A REVIVAL. INDEED BEFORE THE WESLEYS AND WHITFIELDS PREACHED THEIR FLAMING MESSAGE OF REVIVAL AND REFORM, PEOPLE IN ENGLAND WERE WORKING NINETY HOURS A WEEK BUT AS A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, SIXTY WORKING HOURS BECAME THE STANDARD AND THE FIRST TRADE UNIONS WERE FORMED, NOT TO MENTION OTHER WELL KNOWN MOVEMENTS, SUCH AS THE SALVATION ARMY, MISSIONARY SOCIETIES, CHARITABLE AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. WE MIGHT ALSO ADD MOVEMENTS TO ABOLISH SLUMS, SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK AND MANY OTHER USEFUL RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMS. THERE WILL NEVER BE GREAT JOY OR HAPPINESS IN AMERICA UNTIL WE TURN TO SPIRITUAL INTERESTS AND SPIRITUAL ANSWERS TO THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS OF THE HUMAN HEART.

S.A

Drk
1/5
Wash

IV.

ASA WAS A MAN WHOSE GREATEST FAILURE WAS WHEN HE RELIED ON MEN AND NOT ON GOD -

II CHRON. 16:7-9

As ASA NEARED THE END OF HIS LIFE, HE LOST THE FRESHNESS AND VISION OF HIS CONFIDENCE IN GOD. HE BECAME CONCERNED WITH POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND DANGERS AND FORGOT TO SEEK SPIRITUAL SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS. ~~HE FORGOT~~ HOW GOD HAD HELPED IN TIMES PAST. IN THIS REGARD ASA IS A CONSTANT REMINDER THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR YOU AND ME TO BEGIN OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE WELL AND TO BECOME DULL AND LISTLESS IN THE TWILIGHT OF LIFE. ONE OF THE DANGERS OF THE MATURE YEARS OF LIFE IS THE DISPOSITION TO MAKE DECISIONS UPON OUR OWN WITHOUT CONSULTING THE LORD. EVEN IF WE HAVE LEARNED TO TRUST THE LORD IN OUR EARLY YEARS THERE IS ALWAYS THE TENDENCY TO ABANDON THE PRACTICE IN THE SENIOR YEARS. ~~THE GREAT ENEMIES OF THE SOUL, FEAR, WORRY AND LONLINESS~~ SEEM TO BE ESPECIALLY NEAR IN THE TWILIGHT OF LIFE. (RELATE STORY OF DR. SUDGEN REGARDING OUR MUTUAL FRIEND WHO IS ACTING PECULIARLY OUT OF A SENSE OF FAILURE TO ACCOMPLISH CERTAIN GOALS BY HIS MID-FORTIES.) ALSO, COMMENT CONCERNING THE REFERENCE TO ASA'S DEATH AND THE PHYSICIANS. THIS IS NOT A SLAP AT MEDICINE FOR THE DOCTORS WERE LITTLE MORE THAN WITCH DOCTORS IN THOSE DAYS. POINT OF THIS PASSAGE IS THAT WE SHOULD LEARN TO TRUST GOD ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES. LET OUR CONSTANT PRAYER BE THAT WE MAY FINISH OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE WELL. THINK OF THE MANY PEOPLE OF HIGH SPIRITUAL MOTIVATION WHO FAILED IN THIS VERY AREA. ~~NOAH~~ (1) AFTER MANY YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE TO GOD, MISERABLY FAILED IN THE EVENING TIME OF HIS LIFE. (GEN. 9:20-21) ~~MOSES~~ WAS ONE OF THE GREAT LEADERS OF ALL TIME, BUT AT THE CLOSE OF HIS CAREER LOST HIS TEMPER AND LOST HIS OPPORTUNITY TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND BECAUSE OF ONE GREAT FAILURE. (COMPARE NUMBERS 12:3) ~~SAMUEL~~ WAS (3) A GREAT MAN OF GOD BUT FAILED IN RAISING HIS OWN FAMILY AND IN A SENSE, THOUGH SUCCESSFUL WITH THE NATION, FAILED. (I SAM. 8:1-5) ~~SOLOMON~~ BEGAN (4) HIS RULE WITH GRANDEUR AND MAGNIFICENCE BUT BECAME A MISERABLE FAILURE AT THE END BECAUSE HE LET HIS

"man who Died On Third Base"

FLESH DOMINATE THE SPIRITUAL PART OF HIS LIFE.
THESE MEN WERE ALL GREATS AND GOOD MEN FOR THE
MOST PART BUT WERE LED DOWN THE WRONG PATH AWAY
FROM GOD IN MOMENTS OF WEAKNESS. THE BIBLE
TEACHES THAT EVERY STAGE OF LIFE HAS ITS OWN
PECULIAR HAZARDS AND TEMPTATIONS. LET US LEARN
FROM ASA THAT WE SHOULD WALK CAREFULLY AND
PRAYERFULLY BEFORE THE LORD LEST WE FAIL AT ANY
CRUCIAL POINT.

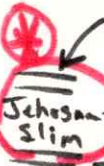
ROBERT K. SPRADLING

OCTOBER 3, 1976

JEHOSHAPHAT

II CHRON. 17:1-21:1

Bee. Pm. Feb '88
1. Spell it
2. Read it
3. Move Light!

 THE NAME JEHOSHAPHAT IS NOT A COMMON HOUSEHOLD WORD NOR A NAME GIVEN TO ONE'S CHILDREN! ABOUT THE ONLY ACQUAINTANCE MOST OF US HAVE WITH THIS OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTER IS WE HAVE HEARD HIS NAME USED IN THE PHRASE "JUMPING JEHOASHAPHAT!" THE NAME IS DIFFICULT TO PRONOUNCE AND SPELL. (RELATE STORY OF THE CHURCH CLERK AND RELUCTANCE TO ORDER A CHANDELIER.) THE O.T. IS FILLED WITH INTERESTING CHARACTERS WHOSE NAME BEGIN WITH "J". (FOR EXAMPLE, JEHOADDAN, JEHOADDAN, JEHOAHAZ, JEHOICHIN, JEHOIDA, JEHOIAKIM, JEHONADAB, TO MENTION BUT A FEW!) JEHOSHAPHAT WAS THE FOURTH KING OF JUDAH, SON OF ASA. HIS MOTHERS NAME WAS AZUBAH. HE IS THE SHINING EXAMPLE IN THE O.T. OF THE ADAGE "LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON." THERE ARE NO LESS THAN FOUR DIFFERENT MEN NAMED JEHOSHAPHAT IN THE O.T. THE NAME LITERALLY MEANS "JEHOVAH JUDGES." HE ASCENDED THE THRONE OF JUDAH AT THE AGE OF 35 AND REIGNED FOR 25 YEARS. AS IN THE CASE OF ASA HIS FATHER, WE MAY LEARN FROM THE LIFE OF JEHOSHAPHAT SOME GREAT PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING:

I. JEHOSHAPHAT WAS A MAN OF GREAT PERSONAL DEVOTION TO GOD - II CHRON. 17:3-6

THE EXTENT OF JEHOSHAPHAT'S DEVOTION TO THE LORD IS REFLECTED IN THE WORD "SOUGHT." FIRST OF ALL, IN V. 3, WE ARE IMPRESSED WITH WHAT HE DID NOT SEEK. GOD SAYS THAT "HE SOUGHT NOT UNTO BAALIM." THE WORD IS THE PLURAL OF THE WORD "BAAL." BAAL WAS THE NAME OF THE SUPREME GOD OF THE CANAANITES. BAAL WAS THE SUN-GOD AND THE WORSHIPPERS OF HIM LOOKED UPON HIM AS THE ONE WHO GAVE LIFE AND WARMTH, AND ALSO THE GOD WHO WAS TO BE APPEALED TO PREVENT DROUGHT AND DISASTER. HUMAN SACRIFICES WERE PART OF THE RITUAL TO APPEASE THE GOD. THE VICTIMS WERE USUALLY BURNT ALIVE. OTHER FORMS OF WORSHIP HAD TO DO WITH BURNING OF INCENSE AND PRIESTS WHO WORKED THEMSELVES INTO A STATE OF FRENZY AND ECSTASY, DANCING AROUND AN ALTAR OF SACRIFICE MULTIPLIED WITH SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS. THE WORSHIP OF THIS HEATHEN DEITY WAS NOT ONLY CONDUCTED IN TEMPLES DESIGNED FOR SUCH "WORSHIP" BUT ON THE SIDES OF HILLS, HOUSES, AND UNDER TREES. TENTS WERE PITCHED IN WHICH TEMPLE

Rock daren on T.V.

HARLOTS PRACTICED THEIR IMMORAL DEEDS UNDER THE NAME OF WORSHIP TO BAAL. GAUDY IMAGES OF BAAL CLOTHED IN COSTLY GARMENTS, OFFERED WITH INCENSE, OIL, AND MONEY WERE TO BE SEEN. WORST OF ALL, SOME OF THE HUMAN SACRIFICES WERE CHILDREN!

* JEHOSEPHAT WOULD HAVE NONE OF THIS NONSENSE IN HIS PERSONAL OR POLITICAL LIFE! IN V. 4 IT SAYS THE HE "SOUGHT TO THE LORD."

THE WORSHIP OF BAAL WAS POPULAR TO THE PEOPLE BECAUSE IT TITORED TO THEIR SEXUAL DESIRES. ANY PEOPLE WHO PERMITS PEOPLE TO INDULGE IN THIS KIND OF "WORSHIP" WILL BE THOUGHT WELL OF. BUT THE PROBLEM WITH SUCH SIN WAS THAT IT WAS MORALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY WRONG AND ONLY A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL WEAKLING WOULD PERMIT SUCH ACTIVITIES IN HIS KINGDOM. JEHOSEPHAT HAD STRONG CONVICTIONS ABOUT WORSHIP OF GOD. OURS IS

A DAY WHEN MANY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE SEEM TO BE ASHAMED OF THEIR FAITH. I WAS IMPRESSED RECENTLY WITH AN

INCIDENT CONCERNING JOHN KNOX AND HIS CONFRONTATION WITH QUEEN MARY. THE QUEEN RESENTED SOME OF KNOX

PREACHING AND LET HER CONCERN BE KNOWN. KNOX ANSWER TO THE QUEEN WAS: "OUTSIDE THE PREACHING

PLACE, MADAM, I THINK FEW HAVE OCCASION TO BE OFFENDED AT ME; AND THERE, MADAM, I AM NOT MASTER

OF MYSELF, BUT MUST OBEY HIM WHO COMMANDS ME TO SPEAK PLAIN AND TO FLATTER NO FLESH UPON THE FACE

OF THE EARTH." IN THE PRESENCE OF JOHN KNOX, THE QUEEN WEPT, BUT KNOX WAS UNMOVED. HE WAS A MAN OF

CONVICTIONS AND WHETHER IT BE QUEEN OR COMMONER HIS BURDEN TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD WITHOUT FEAR

OR FAVOR. SUCH AN ATTITUDE TOWARDS PEOPLE IN HIGH PLACES IS VIRTUALLY UNHEARD OF TODAY. BECAUSE

JEHOSEPHAT WAS A MAN OF MORAL AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH AND INTEGRITY, V. 4 SAYS THE LORD WAS

"WITH JEHOSEPHAT" AND V. 5 "THE LORD ESTABLISHED THE KINGDOM IN HIS HAND..." THAT IS, GOD CONFIRMED

HIS AUTHORITY TO RULE AS KING. ALSO, IN V. 6 IT SAYS "HIS HEART WAS LIFTED UP IN THE WAYS OF THE

LORD." IN OTHER WORDS, HE TOOK GREAT PRIDE IN THE THINGS OF GOD. HIS SERVICE TO GOD WAS NOT

PERFUNCTORY BUT RATHER PRIMARY. HIS HEART GLOWED WITH A FERVOR AND DESIRE FOR GOD. THE LORD WAS REAL

TO HIM. JEHOSEPHAT WAS A MAN WHO HAD A SPIRITUAL CHARACTER TO UPHOLD IN THE NAME OF DAVID HIS

GRANDFATHER. HE WAS CONCERNED THAT THE NAME OF GOD BE HONORED. WHAT DO YOU THINK HIS REPLY WOULD

HAVE BEEN INTERVIEWED BY THE AUTHOR OF "PLAYBUNNY" MAGAZINE! I DO NOT BELIEVE JEHOSEPHAT TRIED TO

Ps. 42:1

IMPOSE HIS BELIEFS ON EVERYBODY BUT HE DID PROVIDE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF SUCH AN EXEMPLARY NATURE THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH WILLINGLY FOLLOWED HIM IN A REVIVAL OF JUDAISM IN THE COUNTRY.

II. JEHOSEPHAT WAS A MAN WITH A GREAT EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY- II CHRON. 17:9-10

NOTE THE EMPHASIS ON THE WORD "TAUGHT." JEHOSEPHAT WAS AN EDUCATOR. IN THE CONTEXT, THE EMPHASIS WAS ON BIBLICAL EDUCATION. HE INSTITUTED A SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION BASED UPON THE WORD OF GOD AND SOUND MORAL PRINCIPLES. HE BELIEVED THAT IGNORANCE SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH ENLIGHTENMENT, AND THEREFORE HE ESTABLISHED A COMMISSION OF TEACHERS TO APPOINT EDUCATORS IN THE VARIOUS TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF THE LAND TO RENEW INSTRUCTION IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW. HE BELIEVED THAT RELIGION AND MORALITY WERE NOT ONLY THE FOUNDATION OF A NATION BUT ALSO THE BULWARKS TO HOLD BACK THE FORCES OF EVIL. IN OUR TIME WE HAVE HEARD OF THE PEACE CORPS. IN JEHOSEPHAT'S TIME HE INSTITUTED THE TEACH CORPS. A TRAVELING FACULTY GOING THROUGHOUT THE LAND TEACHING GREAT TEXTBOOKS OF THE LAW OF MOSES. THE ITINERANT SYSTEM OF INSTRUCTION, A TRAVELING UNIVERSITY OR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY. I DO NOT WISH TO LINGER ON THIS SUBJECT BUT THE CHURCH HAS AN ENORMOUS OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO INSTRUCT THE YOUNG OF OUR NATION IN THE WORD OF GOD. THIS CANNOT AND WILL NOT BE DONE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THEREFORE THE CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOL MOVEMENTS AND THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM OF LOCAL CHURCHES OPEN UP AN AREA OF EDUCATION WHICH MUST BE CLAIMED BY OUR CHURCH AND OTHERS. WE HAVE THE BIBLE AND OUR GREAT NEED IS A CONSTITUENCY OF PEOPLE AND A CORE OF TEACHERS WHO HAVE A BURDEN TO REACH YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE WORD OF GOD. (COMMENT CONCERNING THE OPPORTUNITY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM.) OUR CHURCH IS COMMITTED TO A BIBLICAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. IT IS OUR DESIRE AND GOAL TO SYSTEMATICALLY EXPOSE PEOPLE TO THE TEACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD. IN SUNDAY SCHOOL WE EMPHASIZE BIBLE. IN MORNING AND THE WORSHIP SERVICE WE EMPHASIZE BIBLE. ON TUESDAY NIGHT IN THE EXTENSION CLASSES WE EMPHASIZE BIBLE. IN WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER MEETING WE EMPHASIZE BIBLE. IN THE COURSE OF THE YEAR ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHURCH PROGRAM IS THE BIBLE CONF. IN CAMP PROGRAMS, YOUTH PROGRAMS, THE BIBLE IS CENTRAL. THIS IS NO ACCIDENT THAT OUR LOCAL

School Prophets

Friday
6-128

CHURCH IS CALLED THE BIBLE CENTER CHURCH! TO BE SURE WE ARE INTERESTED IN EVANGELISM, BUT AFTER EVANGELISM COMES EDUCATION. ONE OF THE REAL WEAKNESSES OF MANY FUNDAMENTAL CHURCHES IS THAT AN ALL OUT EFFORT IS MADE TO EVANGELIZE AND LITTLE EFFORT IS MADE TO INSTRUCT IN THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN LIVING. CONSEQUENTLY MANY PEOPLE WHO PROFESS TO KNOW CHRIST SOON BECOME DISCOURAGED AND LOOSE HEART BECAUSE THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. IN MY JUDGMENT, THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL IN ANY CHURCH OR RELIGIOUS GROUP IS INSTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE IN THE WORD OF GOD. *Problems:* OUR CHURCHES ARE FILLED WITH PROGRAMS WHICH *promise* TO BE THE PANACEA OF EVERY AGE. MANY OF THESE PROGRAM PUT MUCH EMPHASIS ON MAN AND LITTLE EMPHASIS ON GOD. PREACHING AND TEACHING OF THE BIBLE IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL BE GOD'S WORK IN GOD'S WAY WITH GOD'S RESULTS. JEHOSEPHAT WAS AN EDUCATOR.

III. JEHOSEPHAT WAS A MAN WITH STRONG CONVICTIONS ABOUT JUSTICE - II CHRON. 19:5-10

JUDICIAL COURTS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED BUT NOW THEY ARE MORE LOCALIZED AND IN EVERY CITY JUDGES WERE APPOINTED. JEHOSEPHAT WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE QUALITY OF JUSTICE AND APPOINTED JUDGES TO PRESIDE OVER COURTS OF COMMON PLEAS AND IN ADDITION TO THESE LOCAL COURTS, TWO COURTS OF APPEAL, ONE ECCLESIASTICAL AND THE OTHER CIVIL, WERE ESTABLISHED IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. IN HIS CHARGE TO THE JUDGES, JEHOSEPHAT REMINDED THEM THAT THEY HAD A DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY AS WELL AS A HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY TO ADMINISTER JUSTICE. V. 7 IN THE NEW AMER. STAND. VERSION SAYS "NOW THEN LET THE FEAR OF THE LORD BE UPON YOU; BE VERY CAREFUL WHAT YOU DO, FOR THE LORD OUR GOD HATH NO PART IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OR PARTIALITY OR THE TAKING OF A BRIBE." NO BRIBES AND NO POLITICAL FAVORS FOR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS WOULD BE TOLERATED. THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW AND FAIRLY ADMINISTERED WAS REQUIRED. THESE JUDGES WERE TO PERFORM THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT SOME DAY THEY WOULD STAND BEFORE GOD AND GIVE ACCOUNT OF THEIR JUDGMENTS. THEY WERE NOT AN ELITE GROUP OF ARISTOCRATES BUT RATHER SERVANTS OF GOD AND THE PEOPLE! A CAREFUL OF THE O.T. WILL SHOW A GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE

RELATIONSHIP OF PEOPLE TO OTHER PEOPLE AND THE RIGHTS OF OTHER PEOPLE. AS A MATTER OF FACT IN BUSINESS JUST WEIGHTS AND MEASURES WERE REQUIRED. (PROV. 11:1, 16:11) IN THE COURTS WHERE THE RIGHTS OF POOR AND RICH, ISRAELITE AND SOJOURNER WERE CONSIDERED, EQUALITY OF JUSTICE WAS DEMANDED. THIS WAS IN CONTRAST WITH WICKEDNESS WHERE MEN DID NOT FEAR GOD AND HAD LITTLE REGARD FOR OTHER HUMAN BEINGS. THESE JUDGES WERE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE. NO WONDER JEHOSEPHAT WAS PRAISED BY THE PEOPLE AND BLESSED BY THE LORD.

QUESTION- WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN THIS COUNTRY IF EVERY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, EVERY JUDGE ALWAYS DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT AND HONORING TO GOD? THIS ACTION ALONE WOULD PROBABLY CHANGE THE MORAL CLIMATE OF OUR COUNTRY!

IV. JEHOSEPHAT WAS A MAN WHO MADE AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE WITH AN UNGODLY KING-1 CHRON. 18:1ff

THIS CHAPTER RECORD THE GREATEST MISTAKE OF JEHOSEPHAT'S LIFE. THE APPEARANCE OF THE NAME AHAB IS A WARNING. THIS MAN WAS ONE OF ISRAEL'S WICKEDEST KINGS AND HIS WIFE WAS THE PERSONIFICATION OF ALL THAT IS WICKED IN WOMANHOOD! SHE RULED HIM FROM BEHIND THE SCENES. AS A MATTER OF FACT, JEHOSEPHAT'S SON HAD MARRIED AHAB'S DAUGHTER AND THIS MAY HAVE BEEN AS MUCH A FAMILY MATTER AS A GENUINE ATTEMPT ON JEHOSEPHAT'S PART TO REESTABLISH THE UNITY OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS. HOWEVER, JEHOSEPHAT AND AHAB SOUGHT TO MAKE AN ALLIANCE TO FIGHT AGAINST THE KING OF SYRIA AND RETAKE THE CITY CALLED RAMOTH-GILEAD. RAMOTH-GILEAD HAD BEEN A CITY OF REFUGE AND WAS IDENTIFIED IN THE LONG HISTORY OF ISRAEL. BEFORE THEY JOINED FORCES TO GO INTO BATTLE, JEHOSEPHAT INSISTED ON HAVING SOME WORD FROM THE LORD CONCERNING THE OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE. THE 400 PROPHETS MENTIONED IN V. 5 AND THEIR APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION DID NOT SATISFY JEHOSEPHAT. ANOTHER PROPHET NAMED MICIAH WAS NOT WELL RECEIVED BY AHAB BUT THIS MAN INDEED PREDICTED AHAB'S DEATH AS A RESULT OF THIS BATTLE. ONE WOULD EXPECT A GODLY PERSON LIKE JEHOSEPHAT TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO PEOPLE LIKE AHAB AND JEZEBEL! (RELATE THE STORY OF NABOTH'S VINEYARD AS AN INDICATION OF JEZEBEL'S CHARACTER.) THERE IS A VALUABLE LESSON FOR THE

(marriage)

LORD'S

PEOPLE TO LEARN IN THIS CHAPTER. JEHOSEPHAT
MADE A MISTAKE WHEN HE SOUGHT THE FRIENDSHIP OF
AHAB. IT LED HIM FROM ONE SENSITIVE SITUATION TO
ANOTHER. JEHOSEPHAT DECIDED TO PRAY AFTER HE
HAD MADE THE DECISION TO ENTER INTO THE ALLIANCE.
THIS IS THE EXACT REVERSE OF THE N.T. PROCEDURE.
JEHOSEPHAT WASN'T THE FIRST OR THE LAST TO LEARN
THE HARD WAY THAT GOD'S PEOPLE CANNOT ENTER INTO
SUCH RELATIONSHIPS AND COME OUT UNTAINTED. (RELATE
THIS INCIDENT TO MARRIAGE, AND BUSINESS, AND ANY
OTHER ALLIANCE WITH UNSAVED PEOPLE, THERE ARE
DANGERS.) THE OVERALL LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM
THE LIFE OF JEHOSEPHAT SEEMS TO BE THAT HERE WAS
A MAN WHO DETERMINED TO WALK IN THE GODLY HERITAGE
OF HIS ANCESTOR DAVID. HIS OWN PERSONAL DEVOTION
AND GODLY LIVING BROUGHT BLESSING TO THE LAND.
IT WOULD BE WELL FOR EVERY FAMILY TODAY TO BE
CONCERNED ABOUT ONE'S SPIRITUAL HERITAGE. PARENTS
COULD WELL ASK THEMSELVES WHAT AM I PASSING ON TO
MY CHILDREN? DO THEY SEE ME PRAY, DO I TAKE THEM
TO SUNDAY SCHOOL AND CHURCH, IS THE BIBLE AND
PRAYER AND CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES AND RELATIONSHIPS
PREVALENT IN OUR HOME? OUR CHILDREN IN LARGE
MEASURE ARE WHAT WE MAKE THEM. I DOUBT VERY
SERIOUSLY THAT JEHOSEPHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN WHAT HE
WAS HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR HIS GODLY FATHER ASA.

2 Cor.
6:14
18

THE TEEN-AGE KING WHO WAS RUINED BY SUCCESS

II CHRONICLES 26:1-22

IN HISTORY, BOY KINGS WERE USUALLY A JOKE. THEY WERE PAWNS IN THE HANDS OF UNSCRUPULOUS POLITICIANS. ISAIAH SPOKE OF SEVERAL SIGNS OF MORAL BREAKDOWN IN ISRAEL AND ONE WAS: "I WILL GIVE CHILDREN TO BE THEIR PRINCES, AND BABES SHALL RULE OVER THEM." THE NIV IS EVEN MORE GRAPHIC, "I WILL MAKE BOYS THEIR OFFICIALS; MERE CHILDREN WILL GOVERN THEM." (ISAIAH 3:4) THIS WAS NOT THE CASE WITH UZZIAH, HE WAS A TEEN-AGER BUT A GENIUS AT HIS JOB. HE GREW WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HIS REIGN. SUCH A SITUATION WAS AS RARE AS IT WAS REFRESHING. LET US EXAMINE THE LIFE AND TIMES OF UZZIAH, THE ELEVENTH KING OF JUDAH.

I. UZZIAH'S EARLY YEARS - V. 1-5

v.1 UZZIAH BECAME KING BY POPULAR CHOICE. HE WOULD DO BETTER THAN HIS FATHER. THE PEOPLE SEEMED GLAD FOR A CHANGE. AMAZIAH'S ASSASSINATION SEEMED TO BE OF NO GREAT CONCERN TO THE PEOPLE. UZZIAH'S MOTHER WAS JECOLIAH OF JERUSALEM. HER NAME MEANS "ENABLED." THIS ONE SENTENCE REFERENCE TO HIS MOTHER SPEAKS VOLUMES. HER INFLUENCE OVER THE LIFE OF HER SON REMINDS READERS OF SCRIPTURE THAT BEING A GOOD MOTHER IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE FOR MOTHERS. MEN DON'T JUST HAPPEN TO TURN OUT RIGHT IN MORALS AND SPIRITUALITY - THEY ARE USUALLY INFLUENCED BY SOMEONE! ACCORDING TO VERSE 4, UZZIAH HAD MORAL AND SPIRITUAL INTERESTS. HE DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT AND HE SOUGHT THE LORD.

v.4

ALL PEOPLE, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT, DO ONE OF TWO THINGS:

(1) DO THAT WHICH IS RIGHT IN THEIR OWN EYES - A SUBJECTIVE AND SELFISH STANDARD OF APPROVAL. (COMPARE JUDGES 21:25) SOLOMON SPOKE OF THE WAYS OF THE FOOL AS BEING RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES. THAT IS, A FOOL THINKS HE IS RIGHT MOST OF THE TIME AND SEES HIMSELF RIGHT WHEN HE IS OBVIOUSLY WRONG. KNOWING RIGHT FROM WRONG IS NOT AS CLEAR AS ONE MIGHT THINK. FOR EXAMPLE, IN MY LIFETIME, SOCIETY HAS MADE SOME DRAMATIC CHANGES WITH REFERENCE TO RIGHT AND WRONG. OURS MAY NOW BE CLASSIFIED A PERMISSIVE SOCIETY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY, CHRISTIAN ETHICS IS UNDER SEVERE ATTACK. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN DIVORCE WAS A DISGRACE, ILLEGAL BABIES A SHAME, LIVING TOGETHER WITHOUT MARRIAGE SINFUL, A HOMOSEXUAL LIFESTYLE WRONG, SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE AND CHASTITY BEFORE MARRIAGE A GOOD THING BUT NOW MADE FUN OF BY MANY. HONESTY A DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC BUT NOW RIDICULED. THE THINGS THAT USED TO SHOCK US ARE NOW ACCEPTED BEHAVIOR. IN A WORLD WHERE MEN AND SOCIETY AND NOT GOD IS THE STANDARD OF CONDUCT - NOTHING IS WRONG IF SOCIETY SAYS IT'S OK! SUCH RELATIVISTIC STANDARDS IS A SURE PATH TO MORAL DISASTER. IT HAS NEVER BEEN EASY TO DO RIGHT BUT IS HAS NEVER BEEN HARDER THAN NOW!

(2) DO THAT WHICH IS RIGHT IN THE EYES OF THE LORD - THIS SUGGESTS AN OBJECTIVE SPIRITUAL STANDARD. IN UZZIAH'S THINKING THE LORD WAS CENTRAL AND PRIMARY IN HIS LIFE, NOT CASUAL. ACCORDING TO VERSE 4, UZZIAH WAS SUCCESSFUL OR PROSPEROUS IN WHAT HE DID. THE WORD PROSPER IN THE TEXT CARRIES WITH IT THE IDEA OF ACCOMPLISHING A GOAL. IT IS USED TO DESCRIBE JOSEPH IN GENESIS 39:23 AS A GOOD ADMINISTRATOR WHO KNEW HOW TO MANAGE THE

3

AFFAIRS OF POTIPHAR'S ESTATE. UZZIAH'S SUCCESS WAS AN UNINTERRUPTED ONE. FROM WAGING WAR TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES TO AN EXTENSIVE CIVIL DEFENSE PROGRAM - UZZIAH WAS EMINENTLY SUCCESSFUL. HOWEVER, HIS PERSONAL DEVOTION TO GOD BEGAN TO ERODE AS POLITICAL DIRECTION BECAME PRIMARY. HOWEVER, HIS EARLY YEARS WERE GOOD YEARS AND HE STARTED DOWN THE RIGHT ROAD OF GOD'S BLESSING. BY THE WAY, UZZIAH IS ANOTHER GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION THAT CHARACTER AND MORALS ARE VITAL IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. WHY DO PEOPLE TRY TO TELL US OTHERWISE IN OUR SPIRITUALLY CONFUSED AGE? COULD IT BE BECAUSE THEY ARE MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY CONFUSED?

II. UZZIAH'S FAME AS A MILIARY LEADER - V. 6-8, 11-15

UZZIAH KNEW HOW TO WAGE AND WIN WARS. WITH 307,500 TROOPS AT HIS DISPOSAL AND WITH THE LATEST IN MILITARY TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT, HE WAS VIRUTALLY INVINCIBLE. HE TOOK ON THE ANCIENT ENEMIES OF ISRAEL, THE PHILISTINES AND PREVAILED. AS A MATTER OF FACT, HE WENT RIGHT INTO THEIR STRONGHOLDS SUCH AS GATH AND WON. HE WAS IN EVERY WAY A FORMIDABLE MILITARY LEADER. AS A MATTER OF FACT, HE SEEMED TO HAVE TAKEN ALL OF THE STEAM OUT OF THE PHILISTINE WAR MACHINE. HIS MILITARY FAME SPREAD FAR AND WIDE. HIS FORCES WERE WELL ORGANIZED AND SUPERVISED. THE LANGUAGE OF VERSE 15 IS A WAY TO DESCRIBE WHAT WE CALL ARTILLERY. HE SEEMS TO HAVE USED ROMAN CATAPULTS BEFORE ROMAN TIMES. MANY OF THE GREAT LEADERS IN THE BIBLE WERE MILIARY MEN SUCH AS ABRAHAM, JOSHUA, THE JUDGES, AND DAVID.

III. UZZIAH WAS A MAN OF VARIED INTERESTS AND ABILITIES - V. 9-10

A CURSORY GLANCE AT THESE VERSES REVEALS THAT HE WAS A BUILDER, ARCHITECT, ENGINEER, RANCHER AND FARMER TO MENTION A FEW. IN VERSE 10 IT SAYS HE WAS "A LOVER OF THE SOIL", THAT IS AGRICULTURE AND RANCHING WERE DEAR TO HIS HEART. TO BE A BUILDER ON THE SCALE MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE SPEAKS OF A MAN OF PLANNING ABILITY, VISION, ENERGY. PEOPLE WHO ENJOY BUILDING USUALLY BUILD THINGS. AS A FARMER, HE LOVED NATURE, THE SOIL, CATTLE, SHEEP, AND ALL THE THINGS THAT GO WITH FARM LIVING. IN THAT REGARD, HE WAS NOT UNLIKE MOST OF THE PEOPLE YOU AND I KNOW. MOST WOULD ENJOY A 5-10 ACRE FARM SOMEWHERE AS A GET-AWAY OR HIDEAWAY. SOMEONE'S DESCRIPTION OF AMERICANS IS A PEOPLE BORN ON THE FARM WHO MOVED TO THE CITY IN ORDER TO MAKE ENOUGH MONEY TO GO BACK TO THE FARM!

IV. UZZIAH WAS RUINED BY PRIDE AND SMITTEN WITH LEPROSY - V. 16-23

PRIDE IS BOTH A VIRTUE AND A VICE. AS A VIRTUE, THERE MAY BE BETTER WORDS TO EXPRESS WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SPEAK OF PRIDE OF COUNTRY, COMMUNITY, CHILDREN OR CRAFTSMANSHIP. WE UNDERSTAND THERE IS A KIND OF NORMAL SELF-CONCERN AS OPPOSED TO ABNORMAL PERSONALITY IMBALANCES. PRIDE MAY BE SEEN FROM A POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIDE OF LIFE. C. S. LEWIS SAYS THAT IMMORALITY, ANGER, GREED AND DRUNKENNESS ARE ALL FLEA BITES COMPARED TO PRIDE. IT IS LIKE AN ODORLESS GAS, UNDETECTED BUT DEADLY WHEN RELEASED. HE SUGGESTS THAT PRIDE GETS NO PLEASURE IN JUST HAVING AND BEING, IT MUST HAVE MORE AND BETTER THAN OTHERS. THE PRIDE MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT IS THE PRIDE THAT WELLS

UP OUT OF HUMAN NATURE IN BATTLE ARRAY AGAINST GOD. IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS A HOSTILE ANTI-GOD STATE OF MIND. IT IS AN INORDINATE AND UNREASONABLE SELF-ESTEEM WHICH MANIFESTS AN ELEVATED OPINION OF ONE'S SELF AND EXPECTS EVERYONE ELSE TO SHARE THAT VIEW! AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE WORD PRIDE IN THE TEXT MEANS TO BE LIFTED UP OR HAUGHTY. OUR SLANG TERM "UPPETY" COMES FROM THIS IDEA. IT IS THE WORD USED TO DESCRIBE SATAN'S ACTIVITY IN EZEKIEL 28:2,5,17. WHEN UZZIAH BECAME IMPRESSED AND INTOXICATED WITH HIS OWN SUCCESS, HE TURNED AWAY FROM GOD AND PRIDE TOOK CONTROL AND HIS TEMPER FLARED WHEN CHALLENGED ABOUT HIS SPIRITUAL MISCONDUCT. UZZIAH HAD NO BUSINESS ASSUMING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A PRIEST. USURPING THE PRIEST'S OFFICE WAS CLEARLY FORBIDDEN IN SCRIPTURE, LIMITED TO THE SONS OF AARON. (NUMBERS 16:40, 18:1-7) F. B. MEYER WAS CORRECT WHEN HE SAID "WE MUST STRUGGLE AT THE OAR INSTEAD OF SPREADING THE SAILS WHEN THERE IS NOT ENOUGH BALLAST IN THE SHIP." SO, NOT CONTENT TO BE A KING ALONE, HE WANTED TO BE A PRIEST TOO. GOD'S JUDGMENT WAS IMMEDIATE AND ISOLATION. HIS SIN THE SAME AS SAUL (I SAM. 13:9) UZZIAH JOINED MIRIAM AND GEHAZI WHO FELL UNDER THE PENALTY OF PRIDE AND PRESUMPTION. (NUMBERS 12:10, II KINGS 5:27) HE JOINED THE RANKS OF LUCIFER AND NEBUCHADNEZZAR WHO FELL VICTIM TO THIS VICE. LET ME SUGGEST THAT THE SIN THAT RUINED UZZIAH MAY ALSO KEEP MANY OUT OF HEAVEN. THE UNWILLINGNESS TO REFER TO ONESELF AS A SINNER HITS AND HURTS PRIDE. ULTIMATELY THE REASON MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT SAVED IS THEIR PRIDE. IT IS NOT UNTIL A MAN'S STIFF NECK, KNEE AND STUBBORN WILL BOWS BEFORE GOD IN HUMILITY THAT HE CAN BE SAVED. HOW SATAN MUST LAUGH WHEN HE SEES PEOPLE WHO ARE RELIGIOUS, MORAL, GENEROUS, HONEST AND EVEN KIND EATEN ALIVE WITH THAT SPIRITUAL CANCER CALLED PRIDE. PRIDE KNOCKED SATAN OUT OF HEAVEN AND IT WILL KEEP MEN FROM THERE TOO.

Mr. TT.
18.4

(LK. 13:3)

TAKING

THE MAN WHO TOOK TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED

II CHRONICLES 26

(SEVERAL YEARS AGO, A MAN SAT IN MY STUDY ON THE VERGE OF TEARS. FOR SOME PERIOD OF TIME HE HAD BEEN EXPRESSING REGRET OVER THE FACT THAT HE HAD NOT TRIED HARDER TO RETAIN A FORMER PASTOR. NOW THEY WERE IN THE THROES OF A DECLINE IN ATTENDANCE, FINANCIAL REVERSES AND WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION IN THEIR LOCAL CHURCH. HE AND I BOTH KNEW THEIR FORMER PASTOR WELL AND HE HAD BEEN AN ABLE PREACHER, BUT NOT ABLE TO DO EVERYTHING SOME OF THE MORE CRITICAL PEOPLE IN THE CONGREGATION DESIRED. ON THAT OCCASION, MY FRIEND LAMENTED THE FACT THAT THEY HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THEIR PASTOR, AND WORST OF ALL HAD TAKEN HIM FOR GRANTED, ASSUMING INCORRECTLY THAT WHEN HE LEFT THEY COULD EASILY REPLACE HIM WITH A BETTER MAN. TAKING PEOPLE, AND THINGS, FOR GRANTED IS COMMON TO ALL. A LACK OF CONCERN FOR CERTAIN SITUATIONS MAY BE DISASTROUS IN THE OUTCOME. MANY DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF SOMETHING UNTIL IT IS TAKEN AWAY. MANY HUSBANDS AND WIVES HAVE NOT RECOGNIZED THE WORTH AND IMPORTANCE OF A COMPANION UNTIL HE OR SHE IS GONE. THEN THE LAMENT COMES: WHY DID I TAKE HIM/HER FOR GRANTED? THE CHAPTER BEFORE US SPEAKS OF A MAN WHO HAD JUST THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LORD. HE STARTED CORRECTLY BUT GREW IN SELF-IMPORTANCE TO THE POINT WHERE HE THOUGHT HE COULD DO WHATEVER HE WANTED TO AND GOD OR NO ONE ELSE COULD SAY ANYTHING. (LET ME INTERJECT THIS IDEA - THERE IS A DANGER IN TAKING THE WORD OF GOD FOR GRANTED, OUR CHURCH, OUR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, OUR HEALTH, FAMILY AND A HUNDRED OTHER THINGS. DON'T DO IT!)

I. PARENTS - v. 1-3

UZZIAH'S FATHER WAS NAMED AMAZIAH. HE WAS NOT A POPULAR RULER; AS A MATTER OF FACT, HIS UNPOPULARITY WAS THAT HE SUFFERED A GREAT MILITARY DEFEAT. THIS DEFEAT LED TO HIS UNDOING. ONE OF THE LESSONS HIS SON LEARNED AND A POLICY HE PRACTICED EARLY IN HIS REIGN WAS TO DEFEAT HIS FATHER'S ENEMIES SOME 20

YEARS AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH, UZZIAH'S MOTHER WAS JECOLIAH. NOT MUCH IS SAID ABOUT HER OTHER THAN THE FACT THAT HER NAME MEANS "ENABLED" AND SHE WAS FROM THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. UZZIAH ATTAINED FAME FAR BEYOND AND IN EXCESS OF HIS PARENTS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THIS IS NOT AN UNUSUAL PROCEDURE; THAT IS, THAT A SON OR DAUGHTER GAINS MORE POPULARITY AND FAVOR THAN THE PARENTS. IN ADDITION TO BEING UNPOPULAR, UZZIAH'S FATHER WAS NOTHING TO BRAG ABOUT SPIRITUALLY. ACCORDING TO II CHRON. 25:2 AMAZIAH DID THE RIGHT THING FOR THE GOOD OF THE NATION BUT NOT OUT OF THE GOODNESS OF HIS OWN HEART. THIS IS ALWAYS A BAD BASIS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH. HOWEVER, IT IS THE COMMON SIN OF POLITICIANS. MANY TIMES THEY DO WHAT THEY DO BECAUSE IT IS EXPEDIENT NOT BECAUSE IT IS RIGHT. THE POINT OF THESE VERSES IS THAT IN SPITE OF UZZIAH'S LACK OF SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND AND TRAINING, HE DID, IN THE EARLY DAYS OF HIS REIGN, ASPIRE TO GREATNESS BECAUSE OF HIS SPIRITUAL INTERESTS AND STABILITY.

II. PROSPERITY - v. 4-15

IN THE BEGINNING OF UZZIAH'S REIGN, HE SOUGHT PERSONAL DEVOTION OVER POLITICAL DIRECTION. AS HE SOUGHT THE LORD'S HELP AND THE GREAT PROPHET ZECHARIAH, HE BECAME WELLKNOWN, ACCORDING TO V. 8 AND V. 15. GOD WAS ELEVATING UZZIAH IN THE EYES OF MEN. HEREIN LIES THE GRAVE DANGER. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MEN WHO BECOME POWERFUL AND WELLKNOWN TO KEEP THEIR EYE UPON THE LORD AND NOT SINK TO THE DESIRE OF BEING SOMEBODY GREAT AMONG MEN. UZZIAH BECAME SUCCESSFUL, POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL, BUT APPARENTLY IT WAS FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL INTEREST. THE TEXT WOULD INDICATE THAT UZZIAH WAS A VERY TALENTED MAN. HIS ABILITY EXTENDED TO ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING. HE KNEW HOW TO BUILD THINGS (V. 6, V. 9). HE WAS A RANCHER AND FARMER ACCORDING TO V. 10. HE WAS A MILITARY MAN. HE KNEW HOW TO MAKE WAR AND HOW TO WIN AT IT. (V. 11-14) HE KNEW HOW TO PRESERVE THINGS. HE KNEW THAT THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY TO KEEP PEACE IN HIS LAND WAS FROM A POSTURE OF STRENGTH. SO HE SET ABOUT TO BUILD UP THE DEFENSES OF HIS COUNTRY IN ADDITION TO WAGING WAR AGAINST HIS BORDER ENEMIES. HE WAS ALSO AN INVENTOR ACCORDING TO V. 15. THE KEY TO UZZIAH'S SUCCESS IS MENTIONED IN V. 5. HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD WAS VITAL.

III. PRESUMPTION - v. 16-18

AFTER THE DEATH OF THE GREAT PROPHET ZECHARIAH, UZZIAH'S HEART WAS LIFTED UP WITH PRIDE AND HE ATTEMPTED TO DO SOMETHING BEYOND HIS AUTHORITY. IN THE ANCIENT KINGDOMS OF THE EAST, KINGS WERE IN THE HABIT OF EXERCISING PRIESTLY FUNCTIONS. WHEN UZZIAH BECAME ELATED OVER HIS POPULARITY AND PROSPERITY, HE DETERMINED TO EXERCISE THAT RIGHT BY BURNING INCENSE ON THE GOLDEN ALTAR IN THE TEMPLE. HOWEVER, WHEN HE ATTEMPTED TO DO SO, HE WAS WITHSTOOD BY AZARIAH AND 80 OTHER PRIESTS WHO STOOD IN HIS WAY TO PREVENT THIS VIOLATION OF SCRIPTURE. UZZIAH MADE A FATAL MISTAKE. HE READ TOO MANY OF HIS OWN HEADLINES AND HE THOUGHT HIS FAME AND ABILITY WERE THE PRODUCTS OF HIS OWN GENIUS. HE ATTEMPTED TO ENTER A FORBIDDEN AREA. (CF. LEV. 10) PRIDE IS A DEADLY SIN, WHETHER IN A KING OR COMMONER. HIS PRIDE LED TO HIS DEFEAT. (CF. DAN. 4:37; 1s. 14:13; AND EZEK. 28:17)

IV. PERIL - v. 19-23

AT THE VERY TIME UZZIAH WAS SEEKING TO VIOLATE THE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC COMMANDS OF GOD'S WORD, HE WAS SMITTEN WITH LEPROSY. WHILE THE ANGER WAS RISING IN HIS TEMPLE, THE WHITE SPOTS OF LEPROSY BECAME VISIBLE ON HIS FOREHEAD. IN A MOMENT HIS PUBLIC LIFE WAS ENDED AND FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE HE WOULD BE A LEPER CONFINED TO A HOSPITAL, WHERE HIS NAME WOULD QUICKLY BE FORGOTTEN IN THE NATION. DISOBEDIENCE BRINGS JUDGMENT. LEPROSY PUT UZZIAH OUT OF CIRCULATION. GOD DOES NOT SMITE MEN WITH LEPROSY TODAY BUT THE LESSON THE THE CHAPTER SHOULD BE HEEDED. IN EVERY DISPENSATION, GOD EXPECTS HIS PEOPLE TO OBEY HIM. THERE ARE CERTAIN PENALTIES TO BE PAID FOR PRESUMPTION. UZZIAH IS A CLASSIC ILLUSTRATION OF THAT FACT. THIS DISEASE WAS THE MOST LOATHSOME AND DREADED DISEASE OF BIBLE TIMES. AT THAT TIME THERE WAS NO CURE. I WONDER IF UZZIAH HAD BEEN GIVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY A FEW MONTHS LATER WHAT HIS REACTION WOULD HAVE BEEN. SOMETIMES WE LEARN TOO LATE THAT IT IS NEVER WISE TO PRESUME UPON GOD'S GRACE.

GATES

NEHEMIAH 8:1-8

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, ONE OF THE AGGRAVATING CHORES WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OPENING GATES. SOME OF MY RELATIVES LIVED IN THE HEAD OF A HOLLOW NEAR SISSONVILLE AND IN ORDER TO GET TO THEIR HOME WE NOT ONLY HAD TO FORD THE RIVER BUT IT REQUIRED OPENING SEVERAL GATES. (RELATE INCIDENT REGARDING A - ~~MORE~~ FORD AND THE RUMBLE SEAT. ALSO, THE EXPERIENCE OF RIDING ON A GATE.) LATER ON AT OUR PRESENT LOCATION THE APPEARANCE OF GATES ACROSS THE ROAD TO KEEP LIVESTOCK IN PASTURE. FOR THE FIRST DOZEN OR SO YEARS, I FELT SURE THE ONLY REASON ADULTS HAD CHILDREN WAS TO HAVE THEM OPEN GATES. THERE ARE MANY REFERENCES IN THE BIBLE TO THE SUBJECT OF GATES. THE FIRST MENTION IS IN GENESIS 19:1 - "AND THERE CAME TWO ANGELS TO SODOM AT EVENING; AND LOT SAT IN THE GATE OF SODOM...." RUTH 4:1 - "THEN WENT BOAZ UP TO THE GATE, AND SAT HIM DOWN THERE...." JUDGES 16:3 - "AND SAMSON LAY TILL MIDNIGHT, AND AROSE AT MIDNIGHT AND TOOK THE DOORS OF THE GATE OF THE CITY AND THE TWO SIDEPOSTS, AND WENT AWAY WITH THEM AND CARRIED THEM TO THE TOP OF THE HILL...." THE GATES TO A CITY WERE USUALLY MASSIVE AND SECURED BY A LARGE BAR TO PREVENT ATTACK WITHIN THE WALLS OF A CITY. TO POSSESS THE GATE OF A CITY WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH TAKING THE CITY. THROUGH THE GATES WORKMEN PASSED FROM DAY TO DAY AND VARIOUS MEETINGS TOOK PLACE AT THE GATE. IT WAS THE CENTER OF PUBLIC LIFE. MARKETS WERE HELD AT THE GATE OF THE CITY WHERE SPECIAL COMMODITIES WERE SOLD. IT WAS THE PLACE FOR LEGAL TRIBUNALS. THE KING HELD PUBLIC AUDIENCES IN THE GATE. JESUS SPOKE OF THE "GATES OF HADES" IN MATTHEW 16:18 AND THIS MAY REFER TO SATAN AND HIS COHORTS OR MORE LIKELY TO THE GATES OF THE GRAVE FROM WHICH THE DEAD DO NOT RETURN AND THEREFORE HE SPEAKS OF HIS CHURCH BEING STRONGER THAN SATAN OR DEATH. NEHEMIAH WAS A GREAT PATRIOT WHO WAS BORN AND RAISED IN PERSIA IN A CITY CALLED SUSA.

Gratitudes
Parents
Gates

HE HAD A COMFORTABLE POSITION OF HONOR AND TRUST AS THE KING'S CUPBEARER. NO ORIENTAL KING WOULD HAVE A PERSON OF QUESTIONABLE CHARACTER NEAR HIM BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF POISON. NEHEMIAH WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL PERSON, BUT HE GREW RESTLESS IN HIS SOUL WHEN HE LEARNED OF THE CONDITION OF HIS HOMELAND AND SPECIFICALLY THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. THE WALLS WERE BROKEN DOWN AND THE GATES WERE BURNED. GOD LAID IT UP UPON NEHEMIAH'S HEART TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM, REBUILD THE WALLS, AND REESTABLISH THE GATES TO THE CITY. THERE ARE TWO GREAT WORDS WHICH STAND OUT IN THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH. ONE IS THE WORD WALLS AND THE OTHER IS THE WORD GATES. IN THE THIRD CHAPTER OF NEHEMIAH THE TERM GATES APPEARS NO LESS THAN 12 TIMES. WHEN NEHEMIAH AS A BASIC TEXT, LET US LOOK AT SEVERAL OTHER PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE WHICH DEAL WITH THIS SUBJECT.

I. THE BEAUTIFUL GATE AND HUMAN INFIRMITY - Acts 3:2-10

man's ugly infirmity

THIS GATE TO HEROD'S TEMPLE WAS KNOWN AS THE BEAUTIFUL GATE AND ALSO THE CORINTHIAN GATE. IT WAS UNUSUAL IN SIZE AND SPLENDOR, MADE OF COSTLY CORINTHIAN BRONZE. IT WAS LARGER THAN THE OTHER GATES AND WAS SO HEAVY THAT IT TOOK 20 MEN TO MOVE IT. ITS MASSIVENESS AND MAGNIFICANCE HAD EARNED THE NAME OF BEAUTIFUL. SOME COMMENTATORS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT WHEN THE LIGHT SHOWN UPON IT IT WAS INDEED SPECTACULAR TO BEHOLD. HOWEVER, THE IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS STORY IS THAT NEITHER THE BEAUTY OF THE TEMPLE NOR OF THE GATE COULD HELP THIS POOR MAN. CERTAINLY THIS CHAPTER SHOULD TELL ALL MEN EVERYWHERE THAT RELIGION AND ART ARE POWERLESS TO HELP MEN SPIRITUALLY. ALL OF THE GLORY OF THE TEMPLE, ITS RITUAL, ITS BUILDINGS, PRIESTS, AND REVERENDS COULD NOT HELP THIS POOR MAN WALK. ONLY JESUS COULD HELP HIS INFIRMITY. IN SOME RESPECTS THIS MAN REPRESENTS A CRIPPLED WORLD WHICH LIES AT THE CHURCHES DOOR. PEOPLE ARE CRIPPLED IN MIND AND BODY. THEY FILL OUR CITY STREETS AND HOSPITALS - EMPTY AND NEEDY WITH NONE TO HELP. SILVER AND GOLD IS NOT THE ANSWER. JESUS ALONE CAN MAKE MEN WALK SPIRITUALLY. THIS MAN REMINDS US OF THE DEPRAVITY OF THE RACE. THIS TERM IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD.

NOT IMMUNE BUT INFECTED - VIRUS CALLED SIN!

BY TOTAL DEPRAVITY WE DO NOT MEAN THAT MEN HAVE NO DISPOSITION TO DO RIGHT AND THEY NEVER DO ANYTHING GOOD OR THAT HE IS AS BAD AS HE COULD BECOME. BUT DEPRAVITY DOES MEAN THAT ALL MEN HAVE A SINFUL NATURE AND ARE CAPABLE OF ALL KINDS OF SINS. AND THAT MAN'S SIN HAS ALIENATED HIMSELF FROM GOD AND THERE IS NO MEANS OF RECOVERY WITHIN HIMSELF BUT ONLY BY THE GRACE OF GOD. I DO NOT MEAN TO PLAY DOWN MORAL VIRTUES, GOOD MANNER, KINDNESS, GENEROSITY, ETHICS, BUT HUMAN GOODNESS IS NOT THE BASIS OF GETTING MEN INTO HEAVEN. (PSALM 51:5, 58:3, JEREMIAH 13:23) (COMMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BEAUTY IN THE HOUSE OF GOD BUT ONLY JESUS CAN HELP MEN IN THEIR SINS.)

II. THE NARROW GATE AND MORAL CHOICE - MATTHEW 7:13-14

IN THIS CHAPTER, JESUS CONTRASTS A SERIES OF TWOS. HE PICTURED LIFE AS BEING IN ONE OF TWO DIRECTIONS. EVERY PERSON IS ON ONE OF TWO ROADS. THE BROAD WAY IS SPOKEN OF AS TRAVELED BY "MANY" AND LEADS TO DESTRUCTION." NOTICE CAREFULLY THAT JESUS DID NOT SAY THAT ALL MEN ARE ASCENDING THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE TO ETERNAL BLISS. HE SAID IN FACT THAT ALL MEN ARE ON A WAY (Born on it) THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION. IT IS THE EASY WAY, IT IS THE POPULAR WAY, IT IS THE WAY OF THE MAJORITY. IT IS TRAVELED BECAUSE IT IS THE WAY OF LEAST RESISTANCE. IN CONTRAST HE TALKED ABOUT A NARROW GATE AND A NARROW WAY. JESUS DID NOT ASK MEN TO GO OUT AND INVESTIGATE ALL OF THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHIES OF THE WORLD AND THEN CHOOSE HIS WAY AS BEING BETTER THAN THEIRS, BUT RATHER HE SAID CHOOSE ME! (JOHN 14:5, ACTS 4:12) SOMETIMES PARENTS FOOLISHLY SAY THEY'RE GOING TO LET THEIR CHILDREN GO THEIR OWN WAY AND CHOOSE WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL ADOPT SOME KIND OF RELIGION SOMETIME IN LIFE. THEY CAN GO TO SUNDAY SCHOOL OR NOT SUNDAY SCHOOL. I WON'T FORCE THEM TO GO! THIS SOUNDS VERY FAIR AND PIOUS, BUT IT IS SIMPLY LETTING CHILDREN TAKE THE LINE OF LEAST RESISTANCE WHICH ALWAYS TAKES THEM AWAY FROM GOD. (WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU WOULD LET YOUR CHILDREN CHOOSE WHETHER OR NOT THEY WANT TO GO TO PUBLIC SCHOOL,

BRUSH THEIR TEETH, TAKE A BATH, GO TO BED EARLY.)
ACCORDING TO THESE VERSES EVERY MAN MUST DECIDE WHICH WAY HE WILL TRAVEL. WE AUTOMATICALLY TAKE THE BROAD ROAD BY VIRTUE OF OUR BENT TO SIN. (JOHN 3:18) I HEARD A PREACHER SAY ONE TIME "WHAT MUST I DO TO GO TO HELL?" THE ANSWER IS NOTHING. THE BIBLE WARNS ABOUT CHOICE OF PROPER DIRECTION IN LIFE. IN PROVERBS 14:12 AND 16:25 SOLOMON SPEAKS OF A WAY WHICH "SEEMS RIGHT", BUT WHEN THE SINNER GETS TO THE END IT RESULTS IN SPIRITUAL DEATH. IT IS LIKE A FREEWAY THAT SEEMS IN GOOD ORDER UNTIL YOU ARE AROUND THE BEND AND IT STOPS SUDDENLY IN AN ABYSS. THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE VERY SINCERE BUT ARE FOLLOWING THE EASY WAY WHICH LEADS TO DESTRUCTION. THIS BROAD WAY IN THE TEXT IS THE ROAD OF THE BELSHAZZARS, RICH YOUNG RULER, RICH FOOL, AGRIPII, FELIX, AND MULTIPLIED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO LOVED THEMSELVES AND OTHER THINGS MORE THAN THEY LOVED GOD. LET ME CHALLENGE YOU TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION. AM I ON THE NARROW WAY THAT LEADS TO GOD OR AM I ON THE BROAD WAY THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION? THE PRINCIPLE OF CHOICE RUNS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE BIBLE. (JOSHUA 24:15, I KINGS 18:21)

III. THE WATERGATE AND SPIRITUAL INTEREST

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT THE ONLY WATERGATE MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD. PICTURE THIS SCENE AS EZRA THE SCRIBE BEGINS TO READ FROM THE ROLL OF SCRIPTURE. THERE IS VITAL INTERESTS AS THE PEOPLE GATHER FROM EARLY MORNING TO MID-DAY TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD READ AND EXPLAINED. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THERE IS NO MORE IMPORTANT FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH THAN THE EXPOSITION OF THE WORD OF GOD. (RELATE STORY OF DR. JAMES GRAY AND HIS INVOLVMENT IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AS A YOUNG PASTOR IN BOSTON. HE WAS ASKED TO PREACH AT A MIDNIGHT SERVICE ON NEW YEARS. HE HAD THE HOUR FROM 10:00 TO 11:00 AND SOMEONE ELSE WAS TO FOLLOW HIM FROM 11:00 TO 12:00. HE PREACHED A SERMON AND THEN THE MAN WHO WAS TO FOLLOW HIM DIDN'T SHOW UP, AND THE PERSON IN CHARGE OF THE MEETING ASKED DR. GRAY IF HE WOULD TAKE OVER. THE DR. DIDN'T HAVE ANY NOTES AND AS A MATTER OF FACT DID NOT HAVE ANOTHER SERMON.

HE SAID I ONLY HAD THE BIBLE AND THANK GOD FOR A FEW NOTES WITHIN THE MARGIN. SO HE TURNED TO A PASSAGE AND BEGAN TO EXPLAIN IT WORD FOR WORD AND TO HIS AMAZEMENT THE PEOPLE ENJOYED THE SECOND MESSAGE BETTER THAN THE FIRST. HE SAID THAT WAS HIS INTRODUCTION TO EXPOSITORY PREACHING) ACCORDING TO VERSE 6 THE REACTION TO BIBLE EXPOSITION WAS WORSHIP OF GOD. WORSHIP AND THE WORD GO TOGETHER. ANOTHER ENCOURAGING ASPECT OF THIS CHAPTER IS THAT THE PEOPLE WERE NOT SO TIME CONSCIOUS. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH TAKE TIME AND DEPTH IN THE WORD OF GOD IS ONE. IT IS MY DEEP CONCERN THAT THE PRIMARY REASON YOU ARE ATTRACTED TO THE BIBLE CENTER CHURCH IS ITS MINISTRY IN THE WORD OF GOD. THERE IS NO QUESTION IN THIS CHAPTER THAT THE WORD OF GOD IS CENTRAL. (EVEN IN OUR ARCHITECTURE WE SAY SOMETHING ABOUT OUR EMPHASIS IN CHURCH. RELATE POSITION OF THE PULPIT.) IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF THE MOODY MONTHLY THERE IS A CHURCH EVALUATION CHECK LIST, I WAS SURPRISED AT THE POSITION OF THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LIST. I APPROVE OF THE LIST BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE ORDER.

IV. THE ETERNAL GATE AND PERPETUAL BLESSING - REVELATION 21:25, 22:14

THE BIBLE TEACHES THE REALITY OF HEAVEN. THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE REMIND US OF SUCH A PLACE. HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY THAT WE ARE NOT BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH THE PROBLEM OF DEATH AND THE PROSPECTS OF A BETTER LAND FOR THOSE WE LOVE. ABRAHAM FIXED HIS EYE ON THAT ETERNAL CITY ACCORDING TO HEBREWS 11:14-16. OUR LORD CAME FROM HEAVEN AND RETURNED THERE. (ACTS 1:11) - JOHN 14:3) WE ARE SURPRISED THAT THE BIBLE DOES NOT GO INTO GREATER DETAIL TO DESCRIBE OUR ETERNAL HOME. HOWEVER, NO DESCRIPTION WOULD BE ADEQUATE TO DESCRIBE THE GLORY AND BLESSING OF THAT PLACE IN COMPARISON TO THE SORROW AND SADNESS OF THIS LIFE. SAINTS OF ALL AGES HAVE HEARD ABOUT HEAVEN AND EVEN SUNG ABOUT IT. "THERE IS A LAND THAT IS FAIRER THAN DAY AND BY FAITH I CAN SEE IT AFAR."

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE HEARD ABOUT THIS PLACE AND SUNG ABOUT IT IN THE OLD COUNTRY CHURCH, BUT AS THEY GREW OLDER AND AS THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD CREPT INTO THEIR LIVES THEIR HOPES DIMMED FOR SUCH A PLACE. THROUGH THE YEARS AS PROFESSORS AND CRITICS HAVE TRIED TO TAKE AWAY THIS HOPE MANY HAVE BECOME DISALLUSIONED AND HARDENED TO ITS REALITY. VANCE HAVNER IN ONE OF HIS BOOKS TELLS HOW THAT WHEN HE FIRST STARTED TO PREACH HE WOULD TAKE A TRAIN TO VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, AND WHEN HE WOULD RETURN TO NORTH CAROLINA HIS FATHER WOULD COME DOWN TO THE DEPOT TO MEET HIM. HIS FATHER'S QUESTION WAS ALWAYS THE SAME: "HOW DID YOU GET ALONG?" AND HAVNER'S REPLY WAS ALWAYS THE SAME: "PRETTY WELL THANK YOU, BUT IT'S SURE GOOD TO BE HOME." HAVNER SAID THAT HE WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED THAT WHEN HE GETS TO HEAVEN AND MEETS HIS FATHER THAT HIS DAD WILL ASK THE OLD FAMILIAR QUESTION: "HOW DID YOU GET ALONG?" TO WHICH HE WILL BE HAPPY TO REPLY: "PRETTY WELL THANK YOU, BUT IT'S SURE GOOD TO BE HOME." THESE VERSES REMIND US THAT THERE IS A PLACE RESERVED FOR THE HOME OF THE SOUL AND THE SAINTS OF GOD. RECENTLY, I WAS AWAKENED EARLY AND SPENT SOME TIME READING RATHER CAREFULLY THIS CHAPTER. I WAS IMPRESSED WITH SEVERAL GREAT TRUTHS. ①. OUR SERVICE IS TO CHRIST - VERSE 3. ②. DON'T TAMPER WITH THE WORD OF GOD - VERSE 18. ③. WORSHIP GOD NOT MEN - VERSE 9. ④. THE LAST INVITATION IN THE BIBLE TO MEN IS COME - VERSE 20. HE IS COMING - VERSE 7. YOU NEED TO COME TO HIM - TODAY!

RKS

Intro.
Jury
we met Sameth Big! BCC
Project ↑ Am
a wall this page
"WALLS"
Feb 1988

Protection

BCC-AM
5/5/74

MEXICO... Brazil
(WALLS)

THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL DOES NOT REFLECT GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN ARCHITECTURE. THE EARLY DAYS OF THE NATION SAW THEM AS PILGRIMS DWELLING IN TENTS, A PASTORAL PEOPLE. THEIR GREATEST WORK IN THIS AREA MAY BE SEEN IN THE WALLS AROUND THE CITIES OF ISRAEL WHICH WERE BUILT AS FORTIFICATIONS AGAINST INVADING ARMIES. THESE WALLS WERE OFTEN HURRIEDLY BUILT AND FREQUENTLY DESTROYED. FOR EXAMPLE, JERUSALEM IS A CITY THAT WAS REPEATEDLY DESTROYED AND BUILT AGAIN UPON ITS RUINS. ONE OF THE INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM HAS TO DO WITH THE APPROXIMATELY TWO MILES OF WALLS AROUND THE OLD CITY. CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THESE WALLS DO NOT DATE BACK TO THE TIME OF CHRIST BUT RATHER WAS BUILT IN THE 16 CENTURY. HOWEVER, A CLOSE STUDY OF THE WALL WILL REVEAL SOMETHING OF THE DIFFERENT PERIODS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CITY. (RELATE OUR TOUR BEGINNING AT THE GOLDEN GATE AND WALKING AROUND THE CITY SEEING SOMETHING OF ITS HISTORY REVEALED IN THE WALLS.) THIS PARTICULAR TOUR CULMINATED THE WESTERN WALL OF THE TEMPLE AREA, COMMONLY CALLED THE "WAILING WALL". THIS WALL IS SACRED TO JEWS BECAUSE IT IS THE WESTERN WALL OF THE ANCIENT TEMPLE ENCLOSURE AND IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE WALL NEAREST TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES. THE PRESENT WALL DATES FROM THE TIME OF HEROD THE GREAT. IT IS VERY IMPRESSIVE TO OBSERVE PEOPLE WHO COME TO THE WALL TO PRAY. THIS HAS BECOME POSSIBLE SINCE THE SIX-DAY WAR. THE WALLS OF THE CITY WERE VERY MUCH IN THE THINKING OF DAVID WHEN HE SAID, "PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM: THEY SHALL PROSPER THAT LOVE THEE, PEACE BE WITHIN THY WALLS, AND PROSPERITY WITHIN THY PALACES." (PSALM 122:6,7) IT MIGHT BE OBSERVED THAT IN ANCIENT TIMES, WALLS WERE NOT ONLY SIGNIFICANT TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL AS A SOURCE OF SECURITY AND PROTECTION, BUT THIS WAS TRUE OF SEVERAL ANCIENT NATIONS AND CITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, THE WALLS OF BABYLON AND THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA.

Today, I would like to consider several walls mentioned in the Bible, and some spiritual lessons we may learn from each.

Death -
Retirement -
Dedication -

I. THE WALL WHICH SPEAKS OF DEPRAVITY - JOSHUA 2:15-18

RAHAB WAS A WOMAN OF LOW MORALS AS FAR AS OUR STANDARD OF MORALS IS CONCERNED. HOWEVER, IN THE CAANANITE RELIGION, HARLOTRY WAS NOT CONSIDERED WRONG. THIS WAS OFTEN THE CASE PAGAN CULTURES WHERE PERMISSIVENESS IN SEX WAS CONDONED AND ACCEPTED IN SOCIETY. THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ABOUT RAHAB TO COMMEND HER TO GOD. SHE LIVED IN A CONDEMNED CITY. ITS DESTRUCTION WAS PREDICTED AND INEVITABLE. HER ONLY HOPE, AND THE HOPE OF ANY PERSON LIVING IN JERICHO, WAS TO FLEE TO GOD IN FAITH. THE LESSON CONCERNING RAHAB HAD TO DO WITH WHERE SHE WAS LIVING. SHE WAS CONDEMNED ON AT LEAST TWO COUNTS: 1. CHARACTER AND 2. CITY WHERE SHE LIVED. UNDOUBTEDLY, THE CITY OF JERICHO WAS FILLED WITH MANY "GOOD" AND RESPECTIBLE PEOPLE. UNDOUBTEDLY, THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO HAD THE GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY AT HEART, WHO WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORS AND THE SOCIAL PROGRESS OF THE CITY. THE POINT OF THE PASSAGE IS THAT OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN JERICHO, ONLY ONE WOMAN AND HER FAMILY RESPONDED TO THE MESSAGE ABOUT GOD!! THIS IS WHAT SINNERS FAIL TO SEE. EVERY MAN LIKE RAHAB DWELLS IN A CONDEMNED PLACE. THE ONLY THING THAT WILL SAVE MEN FROM CONDEMNATION IS BELIEVING THE MESSAGE OF GOD. (ROMANS 10:17; JOHN 5:24; REV. 3:20) RAHAB HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO OFFER GOD BUT HER SIN. SHE WAS SAVED BY GRACE AND FOR NO OTHER REASON. ACCORDING TO HEBREWS 11:30, THE REASON RAHAB DID NOT PERISH WAS BECAUSE SHE BELIEVED THE MESSAGE OF GOD, AND THE REASON OTHER PEOPLE PERISHED WAS BECAUSE THEY FAILED TO BELIEVE IT. SAVING FAITH IS THE ONLY BASIS OF SALVATION. THAT IS WHY GOD SAVES HARLOTS LIKE RAHAB AND SUPPOSED GOOD PEOPLE WHO TRUST IN THEIR OWN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE LOST FOREVER. LUKE 18 TELLS THE STORY OF A GOOD MAN WHO WAS LOST AND A BAD MAN WHO WAS SAVED!! BAD MEN DWELL AT THE WALL OF DEPRAVITY LIKE RAHAB. THEIR ONLY HOPE IS FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISE TO DELIVER ALL WHO WILL COME TO HIM BY FAITH. (EPH. 2:8,9)

II. THE WALLS WHICH SPEAK OF DEATH - II KINGS 9:30-37 I SAM. 31:9-13

A. A QUEEN DEVoured

THE STORY OF JEZEBEL IS NOT A PLEASANT ONE. SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A PHOENICIAN KING, AND BECAME QUEEN IN ISRAEL BY MARRIAGE TO AHAB. THIS

MARRIAGE WAS ARRANGED TO CEMENT AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN AHAB AND THE PHOENICIANS. HER VILE CHARACTER CAME TO THE SURFACE IN SEVERAL PLACES IN THE O.T., BUT NONE MORE OBVIOUS THAN IN THE STORY CONCERNING NABOTH'S VINEYARD. (MOST BIBLE STUDENTS WILL REMEMBER HOW KING AHAB WANTED A VINEYARD THAT BELONGED TO A MAN NAMED NABOTH. THIS PARTICULAR VINEYARD WAS A FAMILY INHERITANCE AND NOT FOR SALE, NEITHER COULD IT BE EXCHANGED FOR ANOTHER PIECE OF LAND WHICH AHAB WAS WILLING TO DO. UPON BEING REFUSED, AHAB WAS DEPRESSED AND IT BECAME OBVIOUS DURING A POUTING SPELL THAT JEZEBEL KNEW EXACTLY HOW TO MANIPULATE HER HUSBAND. THROUGH A SERIES OF SARCASTIC REMARKS AND A PROJECTED PLOT OF SEEKING OUT TWO WITNESSES TO ACCUSE NABOTH OF BLASPHEMOUS TREASON, JEZEBEL HAD NABOTH KILLED AND SECURED THE VINEYARD FOR HER HUSBAND. THE STORY BEFORE US SPEAKS OF HER GRUESOME DEATH ACCORDING TO THE PREDICTIONS OF THE WORD OF GOD. THROUGHOUT THE WORD OF GOD, JEZEBEL HAS COME TO REPRESENT ALL THAT IS WICKED IN WOMANHOOD. IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION ESPECIALLY, SHE IS THE SYMBOL OF COMPROMISE AND UNHOLY ALLIANCES BETWEEN GOD'S PEOPLE AND EVIL. ISRAEL HAD IGNORED THE FACT THAT GOD'S WARNING CONCERNING IDOLATRY MEANT SPIRITUAL, MORAL AND POLITICAL DECAY. ISRAEL'S STRENGTH LAY IN THE WORSHIP OF THE ONE TRUE GOD. JEZEBEL THWARTED THAT ALLEGIANCE.

B. A KING DECAPITATED

THIS STORY BRINGS TO A CONCLUSION AND A SAD ENDING TO THE LIFE OF SAUL, ISRAEL'S FIRST KING. HIS SELF-WILL AND AMBITION AND HIS STEADFAST REFUSAL TO OBEY GOD BROUGHT HIM TO A SHAMEFUL DEATH. AND NOT ONLY SO CONCERNING HIMSELF, BUT ALSO INVOLVED HIS FAMILY AND THE NATION IN DEFEAT AND SHAME. SAUL IS THE ETERNAL REMINDER THAT DEATH AND FAILURE AWAIT THOSE WHO DISOBEY GOD. THE TWO WALLS MENTIONED IN THIS STUDY SPEAK OF THE FACT THAT ALL MEN OR WOMEN WHO PAY NO ATTENTION TO GOD OR HIS WORD ARE DESTINED FOR DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23) THROUGHOUT THE WORD OF GOD, DEATH, BOTH PHYSICAL AND ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD, ARE MENTIONED AS THE WAGES OF WICKEDNESS.

III. THE WALLS WHICH SPEAK OF DEFEAT - Num. 13:28-33

THE STORY OF THE TWELVE SPIES AND THE FORTY DAYS IN CAANAN IS WELL KNOWN. GOD'S PROMISE WAS TO GO IN

AND POSSESS THE LAND. HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY WHO WERE FEARFUL AND FAITHLESS SAW ONLY THE WALLED CITIES WHICH WOULD KEEP THEM FROM CONQUERING THE LAND, IN THEIR JUDGMENT. CONSEQUENTLY, BECAUSE OF THEIR DOUBT AND UNBELIEF, THEY INFLUENCED THE WHOLE NATION TO SUFFER FOR FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, LIVING WASTED LIVES. THEIRS WAS A PHILOSOPHY OF NEGATISM AND DEFEATISM. NOTHING WORTHWHILE CAME TO PASS IN THOSE WASTED YEARS OF WANDERING AS GOD WAITED FOR A GENERATION TO DIE OUT IN ORDER FOR A NEW GENERATION TO ENTER THE LAND IN FAITH. TO MOVE INTO CAANAN REQUIRED FAITH AND NOT DEPENDENCE UPON THE FLESH. SURELY THESE PEOPLE WHO COULD TRUST GOD TO GET THEM OUT OF EGYPT COULD ALSO TRUST HIM TO TAKE THEM INTO THE LAND OF CAANAN, BUT THEY STOPPED SHORT OF THIS ACTIVITY. SOMETIMES THE LORD'S PEOPLE HAVE SHORT MEMORIES AND FORGET WHAT GOD DID AT THE RED SEA. THIS IS ONE OF THE SADDEST CHAPTERS IN ALL OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY. GOD'S PROMISE TO THE ENTIRE NATION WAS TO GO FORWARD, BUT INSTEAD THEY WANTED TO GO BACK TO EGYPT. THE ONE THING GOD WILL NOT HONOR IS THOSE WHO WALK BY SIGHT AND NOT BY FAITH. WHETHER IT BE ON A PERSONAL OR CHURCH-WIDE BASIS, GOD ONLY BLESSES FAITH!! HE WILL HONOR NO OTHER PRINCIPLE. IT WAS IN THE WILDERNESS WITH ALL OF ITS WASTE THAT ISRAEL BEGAN TO COMPLAIN AND MURMUR AGAINST GOD AND MOSES. IT WAS IN THE WILDERNESS THAT THEIR FEARS AND DOUBTS AND PROBLEMS BEGAN TO MOUNT. ALL OF THIS CAME TO PASS BECAUSE THEY REFUSED TO DO WHAT GOD ASKED THEM TO DO. HOW SAD THAT THE WALLS OF THE CITIES IN CAANAN STOPPED THE PEOPLE OF GOD. HAD THEY NEVER HEARD OF JERICHO?

IV. THE WALLS WHICH SPEAK OF DEDICATION - NEH. 6:15 12:27

THE HISTORY OF THE REBUILDING OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM AFTER THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY IS GENERALLY KNOWN BY MOST BELIEVERS. THIS WAS NO EASY TASK. THE PERILS AND PROBLEMS OF WORKING AND FIGHTING BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FOES TOOK ITS TOLL AMONG THE PEOPLE OF GOD. EVERY POSSIBLE KIND OF DIFFICULTY CAME INTO VIEW BUT THE JOB WAS FINISHED. THE INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE STORY IS THAT ONE NEHEMIAH BEGAN THE JOB, HE FINISHED IT. HE DID NOT LET OPPOSITION OR DISCOURAGEMENT STAND IN THE WAY OF COMPLETING THE TASK. NEHEMIAH KNEW FULL WELL THAT OPPOSITION IS NO INDICATION THAT

THE CAUSE IS NOT RIGHT. THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH HAS BEEN A BLESSING TO EVERY CHURCH THAT EVER STARTED A BUILDING PROGRAM. IT IS GOOD TO KNOW THAT GOD STANDS BY HIS PEOPLE IN THE CONFLICT AND THAT DEDICATION TO THE TASK WILL BE REWARDED BY A COMPLETED PROJECT.

V. THE WALL WHICH SPEAKS OF DOOM - DANIEL 5:5 *Include*
move to 3 or 4

BELSHAZZAR AND HIS FRIENDS WERE LIVING IN A KINGDOM THAT HAD BROUGHT FEAR TO THE HEARTS OF SURROUNDING NATIONS. BABYLON HAD LAUGHED AT GOD AND MOCKED SIN. IT SEEMED AS IF THEY WOULD RULE FOREVER, GOING THEIR OWN WAY AND INDEED THE HEAVENS SEEMED TO BE SILENT AND GOD POWERLESS TO ACT. HOWEVER, THE GOD OF THE BIBLE WAITED FOR THE EXACT MOMENT TO WARN BELSHAZZAR THAT HIS KINGDOM HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM HIM. JUST AS GOD HAD SPOKEN TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR, HIS GRANDFATHER, SO NOW GOD SPEAKS TO THE FINAL BABYLONIAN RULER AND TELLS HIM OF COMING JUDGMENT. THE FALL OF BABYLON WAS VIRTUALLY WITHOUT CONTEST AS THE PEOPLE OF WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN THE IMPREGNABLE CITY DIED LIKE SHEEP BEFORE THE SLAUGHTERER. THIS CHAPTER HAS COME TO REPRESENT THE STORY OF ALL MEN WHO BELIEVE THEY CAN LIVE IN THIS LIFE WITHOUT REGARD FOR GOD. THE DAY OF RECKONING IS INEVITABLE. THE HANDWRITING COMES UPON THE WALL FOR NATION AND INDIVIDUALS WHO TAKE THE GOD OF THE BIBLE LIGHTLY. THE WARNINGS OF THE BIBLE ARE GIVEN TO US IN ORDER THAT WE MAY ACT IN FAITH AND IN TIME. BELSHAZZAR IN THE O.T. REMINDS ME OF THE RICH FOOL IN THE N.T. -- COMPARE LUKE 12. BOTH STORIES TELL OF MEN WHO WERE SO BUSY WITH THIS LIFE AND ITS PLEASURES THAT THEY FORGOT ABOUT ETERNITY AND ITS DEMANDS.

A Folly of Three Fools?
"THE FOLLY OF THREE FOOLS"

A Folly of Three Fools

The word fool has a jarring sound to it. We do not usually apply it to other people. One reason has to do with Jesus' saying in Matthew 5:22: "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Of course, the context of the chapter indicates that our Lord was speaking of the danger of being angry with others. The man who lets anger well up in his heart to the point of calling another this strong word is standing on very dangerous ground! However, there is another usage of the word fool in the Bible. It refers to the person who has acted unwisely, foolishly. A case in point was the rich man in Luke 12--God called him a fool.

Cain stood here

In the Old Testament, there is within a certain 10 chapters, the record of three men who were called fools. In the first, a man's wife called him a fool. In the second, a man called himself a fool. And in the third, a king called one of his soldiers a fool.

I. THE CASE OF NABAL THE CONTEMPTUOUS FOOL--1 Sam. 25 (25:25)

This chapter opens with the death of Samuel. For many years the nation had been blessed with the wisdom and godly example of Samuel. His very presence had been a continuing influence for good. But the time came for him to die---a nation plunged into mourning at the loss of a good man. They gave him the last rites and honor worth such an educator and statesman in their nation. (Could not help but observe in this chapter--two men died--one they lamented the other they rejoiced) Let us look at a brief outline of this chapter:

A. Riches--v.2-4

Every age has men like Nabal. They are wealthy but devoid of the common courtesies of life. They are overbearing, self-important, self-indulgent and independent of others. He lived only to increase his goods for selfish purposes. The text says he was very great in goods. This is the poorest kind of greatness. Someone has said there are 4 kinds of greatness:

1. Greatness of possessions--as here. Possessing.
2. Greatness of Doing
3. Greatness of Thinking
4. Greatness of Being--- the greatness of character.

There is no greatness more important than this. In a time when Nabal should have been generous and kind to David he resorted to insults and sneers which we shall observe.

I must confess that the contrast in character between Nabal and Abigail bothered me for a while. I wondered how a woman of such grace and wisdom could ever get hooked with a character like Nabal. It is not likely that she married him for his wealth. The only reasonable answer seems to be that in the East, often marriages were arranged by the families in such a way that the children had no say so in the matter. And yet in experience, it is amazing how many Abigails are married to Nabals! Godly women of grace and charm with high ideals and noble intentions in life are married to men like Nabal who live for themselves and their work and possessions. This poor fellow never did realize that the most valuable thing in his life was his wife!

B. Request--v.5-9

This was a very reasonable request. David was responsible for protecting Nabals flocks from the plundering and stealing of strangers.

C. Reply--v.10-11

D. Reaction--v.12-13

David's wounded pride would not hold still for such an insult. To be sure, David was wrong in his anger, especially if he had carried out his plan to kill Nabal. David had no legal right to any of Nabals property. He had not a slightest reason for seeking to take revenge. Life is sacred--even Nabal's!

E. Restraint--v.23-25

This woman possessed an unusual gift of tact and ability to turn David from his revenge. A man might not have been successful.

F. Results--v.37-39

Nabal was probably so enraged at Abigails actions in the loss of face and property that he died of a stroke! Now a wise wife has become a wealthy widow. This story is recorded in the Old Testament but it is as new as the morning paper. The world is filled with men like Nabal--no interest or regard for anything but themselves. They usually die unnoticed and few people miss them! A sad commentary on a life.

II. THE CASE OF SAUL THE JEALOUS FOOL-- 1 Sam. 26:21

This chapter records the last time Saul and David would ever meet. Soon Saul would die on the hills of Gilboa in shame and military disgrace. This chapter points out the ups and downs of Saul's attitude toward David. If ever there was a Dr. Jeckl/Mr. Hyde type of person in the Bible--it was Saul. For a short time in those early days, Saul seemed to be pleased with young David. His fearlessness in battle, his musical ability, his loyalty to Saul all these appealed to Saul as long as David was very young.

But then came that unforgettable day as David and Saul came back to Jerusalem from their military exploits. The crowds that lined the streets were as large as every and as enthusiastic as ever--but a new chant-- "Saul-- thousands--David ten-thousands." From that day on Saul was never the same toward David. Then came the relationship of David to Jonathan. How this must have angered Saul--a man who has few friends is jealous of those who do! It never dawned on Saul that he could have been David's greatest friend had it not been for the monstrous jealousy that filled his heart. Saul's jealousy and pride made him a miserable man. He was constantly at war with himself. He was suspicious of David.

Now, Saul suddenly faced with the fact that David could have taken his life but did not is aware of the foolishness and failure of his treatment of David. He cries out in his despair--"I have played the fool" but the die has been cast and apparently there was no turning back for Saul. David could never really expose himself to Saul again for Saul was so subject to fits of hatred that none would dare take the risk. What a sad picture of a dejected man whom jealousy destroyed!

III. THE CASE OF ABNER THE CARELESS FOOL--2 Sam. 3:33

First Samuel closes with the death of Saul and 3 of his sons. Saul's chief military man was named Abner. Immediately Abner made efforts to get Saul's son Ishbosheth on the throne. Ishbosheth was a weak puppet in the hands of Abner. After 5 years of difficult military warfare, Abner won back much of the lost territory. However, even though his forces were more numerous than Judah--few soldiers could match the 600 crack troops in David's personal group. As time went on David seems to increase in power. 2 Sam. 2 tells of a particular place--- the pool of Gibeon where fierce conflicts had caused untold blood shed but not a complete victory for either side. So Abner and Joab set up a plan--let a representative number of 12 from each side fight for this pool. All 24 were killed and the two main groups began to fight. Abner and his forces were beaten--Abner fled and was pursued by young Asahel. Abner pled with him to go back for he knew what such a death would bring-- a bloody feud. Asahel was killed. Abner's forces down 360/20 for Joab. Two years went by. A quarrel between Abner and Ishbosheth over a woman. Wounded in pride Abner makes overtures to David for a transfer of allegiance. After tests of his sincerity--a feast was given in honor of Abner transfer of loyalty.

David knew that Joab still hated Abner for the death of Asahel sent Joab out to battle before Abner arrived for the feast. Joab returned prematurely just after Abner had left. Sent a message under David's name for him to return. At the gate of Hebron, drew him aside feigning a private conversation and stabbed him. The chapter records David's great lament over the death of Abner.

Abner in his disappointment in the reaction of his king to Abner's loyalty did a very foolish thing. He thought or miscalculated that Joab would have let by-gones be by-gones. He did not know how deeply Joab could hate. Abner was a man who was unaware of his peril. Let me make this present application.

It is ironical that Abner died outside the city of Hebron--one of the cities of refuge! There were 3 cities on each side of the Jordan river--a place where in cases of accidental manslaughter, ~~xxxxxx~~ or such as this, a family grudge, a person could flee to these cities and be safe. All he had to do was stay there until the high priest died. If Abner had been inside the city walls, there was nothing Joab could have done. Abner died within reach of legal safety.
Application:

There are hosts of people just like Abner who will die the death of a fool. They are near the place of safety. They have heard the gospel. They know to recieve Christ means deliverance from eternal judgment--but like Abner they miscalculate. They plan to get ~~xxxx~~ right with God someday. One day they will wait one day too long! Not ~~xxx~~ me. Abner thought all was going his way--David had accepted him and for the first time in his life he was associated with a man who could appreciate his worth as a military man. Died without warning!

LUKE 12 | 16

(Don & Berry)

A.M.

THE MAN WHO DIED ON THIRD BASEDEUTERONOMY 34:5-6

THIS MESSAGE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH BASEBALL. (COMMENT ON PITCHER AS A CITY IN SOUTH AMERICA AND PETE ROSE - PEAT MOSS!) SOME PEOPLE LOOK UPON THE DEATH OF MOSES THE WAY BILLY MARTIN LOOKED UPON HIS SUSPENSION - TOO SEVERE FOR SUCH A MINOR INFRACTION. GOD'S INSTRUCTION TO MOSES WAS TO SPEAK TO THE ROCK. INSTEAD, MOSES STRUCK THE ROCK. HIS DISOBEDIENCE SEEMS TO BE SMALL WHEN WEIGHED AGAINST THE GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HIS ENTIRE LIFE. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT GOD DEALS WITH HIS OWN WITH HIGH STANDARDS, AND THOSE WHO WALK NEAR HIM AND CARRY HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD EVEN IN THE SMALL DETAILS. TO BE SURE, MOSES' SIN OF UNBELIEF AND DISOBEDIENCE WAS FORGIVEN BUT THE CONSEQUENCES REMAINED. THE PROBLEM TODAY IS THAT YOU AND I ARE TOO CASUAL CONCERNING OBEDIENCE TO GOD! MOSES WAS A REMARKABLE MAN AS VERSE 10 SUGGESTS. HE LEFT EGYPT AND ITS WEALTH AND POWER TO LEAD A GROUP OF SLAVES TO BECOME A NATION. HIS COURAGE, SELFLESSNESS, AND FAITH STAND OUT IN GOD'S HALL OF FAME. IN HEBREWS 11, SEVEN OF THE FORTY VERSES IN THIS GREAT FAITH CHAPTER ARE DEVOTED TO THE LIFE OF MOSES! ONE-SIXTH OF THIS CHAPTER DEALS WITH THE LIFE OF THIS AMAZING MAN! IN THE CHAPTER BEFORE US, WE WILL LIMIT OUR CONSIDERATION TO THREE LESSONS WE MAY LEARN FROM THE LIFE OF MOSES - "THE MAN WHO DIED ON THIRD BASE" OR A MAN WHO WAS NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND BUT DIED SHORT OF THAT ACCOMPLISHMENT.

I. THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LIFE - vs. 1-4

PERHAPS MOSES EXPECTED GOD TO PERMIT HIM TO LEAD THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT ALL THE WAY TO CANAAN. UNDOUBTEDLY, FAILURE TO REACH THAT GOAL WAS DISAPPOINTING TO MOSES. SOMETIMES OUR DEEPEST ASPIRATIONS SIMPLY ARE NOT ACCOMPLISHED IN THIS LIFE. IN THE BOOK ENTITLED: THE BOOK OF FAILURES BY STEPHEN PILE, THE STORY IS TOLD OF THE FIREMEN WHO WERE CALLED TO RESCUE A CAT BELONGING TO AN ELDERLY LADY IN LONDON THAT WAS TRAPPED IN A TREE. WITH HASTE AND EFFICIENCY, THEY DISCHARGED THEIR

*Time For
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LIKE MOSES, NO COMPLAINTS, NO WHINING, NO GRIPING, NO SELF-PITY. HELP ME TO BELIEVE IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, THAT THIS APPARENT DISAPPOINTMENT WILL WORK OUT FOR MY GOOD AND YOUR GLORY." (THE PHILLIPS TRANSLATION SAYS OF HEBREW 12:1.... "LET US RUN THE RACE THAT WE HAVE TO RUN WITH PATIENCE, OUR EYES FIXED ON JESUS, THE SOURCE AND GOAL OF OUR FAITH.")

II. ^{Certainty} THE IMMINENCE OF DEATH - vs. 5-7 ^(Heb 9:27)

^{the Divine Appointment - Sooner than Expected}
THE FACT THAT MOSES WAS A CHOICE SERVANT OF GOD DID NOT GUARANTEE HIM IMMUNITY FROM DEATH. MOSES WAS NOT SICK NOR INFIRMED BY THE MALADIES OF OLD AGE, BUT HE IS ANOTHER REMINDER IN SCRIPTURE THAT EVEN GOOD MEN MAY HAVE THEIR LIVES SHORTENED BY SIN! MOSES DIED THE WAY HE HAD LIVED, BY FAITH UNDER GOD'S LOVING CARE. THE TEXT REFERS TO HIM AS "THE SERVANT OF THE LORD." (COMPARE JOSHUA 1:1-2) THOSE WHO CLAIM TO KNOW THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DIE WELL. (PHILIPPIANS 1:20-21, II CORINTHIANS 5:1) I DO NOT WISH TO BE MORBID, BUT IT IS A FACT OF LIFE. THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING TOLD SOMEDAY SOONER OR LATER THAT WE HAVE AN ILLNESS THAT IS "TERMINAL" COMES TO US ALL. FOR THE SERVANTS OF GOD, THIS SHOULD BE NO CAUSE FOR PANIC. IT IS EASY TO MOUTH PIOUS WORDS WHEN WE ARE NOT AFFECTED. AND IT IS RELATIVELY EASY TO TELL OTHERS HOW THEY SHOULD FACE DEATH. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT HOW WE FACE DEATH DEPENDS ON HOW WE HAVE SERVED IN THIS LIFE AND WHOM WE HAVE SERVED! MOSES HAD SERVED GOD AND ISRAEL TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT HE WAS IDENTIFIED AS A SERVANT OF GOD. THERE IS NO HIGHER CALLING THAN THIS. GOD WAS BRINGING TO PASS HIS PLAN AND HIS TIMETABLE FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL, AND HIS GREAT SERVANT HAD FINISHED HIS COURSE. UNATTENDED AND UNACCOMPANIED BY FRIENDS, MOSES ASCENDED THE MOUNTAIN ALONE TO DIE. MANY OF US DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE LONELINESS OF LEADERSHIP. PROPHETS BY THE NATURE OF THEIR CALLING WERE SOLITARY MEN. (COMPARE EAGLES AND FLOCKS OF BIRDS.) THESE MEN SHOULDERED THE HEAVY BURDENS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MESSAGE OF GOD AND AS AT SINAI, MOSES ASCENDED THE MOUNTAIN LEAVING HIS ASSOCIATES BEHIND AND HE STOOD ON THE MOUNT OF GOD ALONE. FOR A GENERATION OF LONELY PEOPLE, ONE NEEDS TO SAY A WORD ABOUT THINKING AHEAD TO THAT MOMENT OF ULTIMATE LONELINESS. AGAIN, I DO NOT WISH TO BE MORBID OR FRIGHTENING, BUT THE ONE THING YOU AND I MUST DO ALONE IS DIE. LIKE MOSES, THAT MOMENT WILL COME TO ALL OF US WHEN FAMILIAR FACES,

DUTY, BRINGING THE CAT SAFELY TO THE GROUND. THE LADY WAS SO GRATEFUL THAT SHE INVITED ALL THE FIREMEN FOR TEA. DRIVING AWAY WITH HER GRATITUDE AND FOND FAREWELLS - THEY RAN OVER THE CAT AND KILLED IT! SOMETIMES LIFE IS THAT WAY, WE APPEAR TO BE HEADED HOME WHEN THINGS BEGIN TO GO WRONG. ONE OF THE TRUE TESTS OF CHARACTER IS HOW ONE DEALS WITH DISAPPOINTMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE DISAPPOINTMENTS IN (1) ROMANCE - ALMOST EVERY PERSON HAS KNOWN FAILURE IN THIS REGARD. (2) EMPLOYMENT - MAY PEOPLE HAVE FELT PASSED OVER OR LEFT OUT IN THEIR JOB SITUATION. (3) ILLNESS - TO BE LAID ASIDE PHYSICALLY IN THE PRIME OF LIFE, UNABLE TO ACCOMPLISH DESIRED GOALS, MAY BE FRUSTRATING AND DISAPPOINTING. (4) FAMILY - IT IS A TWO-WAY STREET BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN. BOTH MAY BE DISAPPOINTED IN THE OTHER. (COMPARE ELI AND DAVID.) (5) CHURCH - SOME OF LIFE'S GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENTS HAVE TO DO WITH CHURCH LIFE. PASTORS AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS WHO FAIL TO LIVE UP TO THE ASPIRATIONS OF OTHERS. CHURCHES WHO FAIL TO GROW AND DEVELOP REACH OUT IN THE COMMUNITY SIMPLY BECAUSE OF PETTY DIFFERENCES OR A FEW OBSTINATE PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT CHANGE. WITH REGULARITY, THINGS DO NOT GO ACCORDING TO PLAN. OUR EXPECTATIONS ARE SHATTERED, OUR DREAMS AND DESIRES COLLAPSE. HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY THAT ALL OF US DO NOT HAVE TO DEAL WITH SOME MINOR OR MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENT IN LIFE. TOO OFTEN WE ARE PRONE TO SAY "I QUIT". LET US LOOK CAREFULLY AT THE LIFE OF MOSES FOR DIRECTION IN THIS REGARD. THERE IS NOT ONE HINT OF REBELLION OR FRUSTRATION ON THE PART OF MOSES. EVERYONE HAS DISAPPOINTMENTS. IT IS PART OF THE TOTAL FABRIC OF LIFE. MOSES ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT HE MUST BE CONTENT TO SEE THE LAND AND NOT ENTER IT. GOD'S PLAN INVOLVED ACCOMPLISHING HIS PURPOSE IN THE LAND THROUGH ANOTHER LEADER, AND MOSES ACCEPTED THAT DECISION GRACEFULLY. BY THE WAY, THERE IS A DISPENSATIONAL PICTURE SEEN IN THIS TRANSFER OF LEADERSHIP. MOSES, FOREVER THE SYMBOL OF A LAW, COULD NOT LEAD THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL INTO THE PROMISED LAND. THAT WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A MAN NAMED JOSHUA, WHOSE NAME MEANS "SAVIOR". (EXPLAIN AND APPLY) THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LIFE SHOULD REMIND EVERY BELIEVER THAT OUR DAYS SHOULD BE FIXED ON CHRIST AND NOT ON ONE ANOTHER OR OURSELVES. (HEBREWS 12:1-2) WE ARE ALL PRONE TO LOOK TO SOMEONE ELSE FOR DIRECTION WHEN WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO LOOK TO HIM. PRAYER:

"LORD, HELP ME TO DEAL WITH TODAY'S DISAPPOINTMENTS

(See Ziglar's Bk.)

PLACES, AND WORDS WILL NOT HELP A GREAT DEAL. HOW SAD TO SEE PEOPLE PASS FROM THIS LIFE INTO THE NEXT UNPREPARED. ONE MAY PUT THE THOUGHT OUT OF HIS MIND, BUT SOONER OR LATER EVERYONE MUST FACE THAT FRIGHTFUL MOMENT. THE POINT OF THIS PASSAGE IS THAT MOSES WAS READY TO DIE. HIS WORK WAS DONE, AND IT WAS TIME FOR JOSHUA TO ASSUME THE REINS OF LEADERSHIP. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID: "EVERY MAN IS ALONE WHEN HE DIES." THE WORD TO ALL OF US THIS LORD'S DAY IS THAT WE, LIKE MOSES, SHOULD MAKE SURE IN DEATH'S DESPERATE HOUR THAT THE LORD IS WITH US. THE FOLLOWING IS A VERSE OF A SONG:

"HOLD THOU THY CROSS BEFORE MY CLOSING EYES!
SHINE THROUGH THE GLOOM!
AND LIGHT ME TO THE SKIES!
HEAVEN'S MORNING BREAKS, AND EARTH'S VAIN
SHADOWS FLEE.
IN LIFE, IN DEATH, OH LORD, ABIDE WITH ME."

MOSES' FUNERAL WAS UNIQUE. GOD ATTENDED TO EVERY DETAIL. THE GOD WHOM MOSES HAD TRUSTED IN EGYPT LONG AGO WAS FAITHFUL IN CARING FOR HIS LONELY SERVANT. THERE WAS A SENSE IN WHICH GOD ENTRUSTED NO HUMAN INSTRUMENT OR PERSON TO THE DETAILS, THE DEATH OF THIS VENERABLE SERVANT. SURELY THOSE WHO HAVE LEARNED TO TRUST GOD IN LIFE MAY TRUST HIM IN DEATH. WE ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT MOSES' GRAVE WAS UNMARKED AS IT IS TODAY. THE WORLD HAS BEEN PRESERVED FROM IDOLATRY, AT LEAST AS FAR AS MOSES IS CONCERNED, BY AN UNMARKED GRAVE. THERE IS NO MECCA TO MOSES. (COMMENT ON JUDE 9 AND LUKE 9:29-31) YEARS AGO, A FAMOUS AMERICAN ASTRONOMER DIED. THE GRAVESTONE BORE THIS INSCRIPTION: "I HAVE LIVED TOO LONG AMONG THE STARS TO FEAR THE NIGHT." THOSE WHO HAVE WALKED WITH GOD IN LIFE SHOULD KNOW AND APPRECIATE THE COMFORTING PRESENCE OF GOD EVEN IN LIFE'S CLOSING HOUR.

III. GOD'S CARE FOR HIS SORROWING PEOPLE - *all the*
VERSES 8-9

II A Funeral where God was in charge of all arrangements
NO PERSON OF MOSES' MAGNITUDE IN PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP ABILITY MAY BE TAKEN AWAY WITHOUT A SENSE OF EXTREME LOSS. THE PEOPLE OF GOD MOURNED THE LOSS OF THIS GREAT AND FAITHFUL LEADER, BUT GOD HAD ANOTHER MAN READY TO TAKE HIS PLACE. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID: "GOD BURIES HIS WORKERS, BUT HIS WORK CARRIES ON." FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN GOD

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TOOK ELIJAH HOME TO HEAVEN IN A FIERY CHARIOT,
ELISHA ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE VERY MOMENT WHEN
HE WAS SWEEP AWAY. GOD ALWAYS HAS ANOTHER MAN
READY TO TAKE THE PLACE OF THOSE WHOM HE CALLS
HOME. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH THE LIFE OF MOSES
IS AN INSPIRATION TO ALL. EVERY PERSON HAS SEEN
SOME OF HIS OR HER HOPES IN THIS LIFE DASHED TO
THE GROUND. ALL OF US HAVE DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS
YET UNFULFILLED ON EARTH. SOME OF US, LIKE MOSES,
MAY DIE BEFORE THOSE GOALS ARE ACCOMPLISHED. BUT
IF A WORK IS TRULY GOD'S WORK ON EARTH, IT WILL
ABIDE AND IT WILL CONTINUE. ILLUSTRATE BY
MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE. D.L. MOODY WAS AN EVAN-
GELIST, AND WE DO NOT ASSOCIATE EDUCATIONAL GOALS
WITH EVANGELISM, AND YET THAT INSTITUTION HAS
TURNED OUT TEACHERS AND MISSIONARIES FOR A HUNDRED
YEARS. THE SAME IS TRUE OF B.J.U.) 1110

(See W.W. Statement
Bible Mang.) Conclusion —
B.M.I.

And did visit the Promised Land —
1600 years later!!

Lesson for us:

" BROKEN WALLS + Burned Gates "
NEHEMIAH 1 - 6

TODAY, THE EYES OF THE WORLD ARE FOCUSED UPON THE MIDDLE EAST. IN AMERICA, PEOPLE OF JEWISH BACKGROUND HAVE RALLIED TO THE DEFENSE OF ISRAEL BY SENDING OVER \$100,000,000 IN GIFTS AND PURCHASING OVER \$150,000,000 IN BONDS IN ORDER THAT THIS TINY NATION MIGHT SURVIVE IN OUR TIME. ONCE AGAIN, IN THE 20TH CENTURY, ISRAEL IS THREATENED BY AGGRESSION. HOWEVER, THIS IS NOTHING NEW IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY, BECAUSE OF THEIR DIS-OBEDIENCE IN BIBLE TIMES, GOD PERMITTED BABYLON TO CARRY THE NATION AWAY INTO CAPTIVITY FOR 70 YEARS. AFTER THE 70 YEARS WERE COMPLETED, SOME OF THE JEWS RETURNED TO THEIR NATIVE COUNTRY BUT OTHERS REMAINED IN BABYLON. THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH IS THAT OF A FINE JEWISH LAD LIVING IN PERSIA, WHO RECEIVED NEWS OF THE COUNTRY OF HIS FOREFATHERS AND THE NEED OF CIVIL REFORM IN THE NATION. NEHEMIAH HEARD THAT THE WALLS OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF JERUSALEM WERE BROKEN DOWN; THE GATES HAD BEEN BURNED. HE KNEW THAT A CITY WITH-OUT WALLS AND GATES WAS THE PREY OF EVERY ENEMY IN THE LAND. FROM THE MOMENT HE RECEIVED THAT NEWS, AND WE WILL TALK ABOUT IT MORE IN DETAIL IN A MOMENT, HIS ONE BURDEN WAS TO BUILD AGAIN THE FORTIFICATION OF THE CITY TO PROTECT IT FROM AGGRESSORS. LAST YEAR, SEVERAL OF US WALKED AROUND THE WALLS OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. TO BE SURE, THESE ARE NOT THE WALLS WHICH NEHEMIAH SAW. THE PRESENT WALLS AROUND THE CITY WERE BUILT BY THE TURKS IN THE 16TH CENTURY, BUT AT SPECIAL PLACES, ONE COULD SEE TRACES OF THE ANCIENT WALL AND BE REMINDED OF THAT OCCASION WHERE NEHEMIAH CAME TO THE CITY AND SURVEYED THE WALLS AND ASKED WHAT GOD WOULD HAVE HIM DO TO RESTORE JERUSALEM'S FORTIFICATIONS.

I. NEHEMIAH HAD A VISION TO BUILD THE WALLS -
NEHEMIAH 1:3

THE NEWS OF THE BROKEN WALLS CAME TO NEHEMIAH FROM HIS BROTHER WHO HAD RETURNED FROM JERUSALEM. NEHEMIAH WAS LIVING THE LIFE OF LUXURY, SECURITY, AND EASE IN PERSIA. HE WAS THE CUP BEARER OF A PERSIAN KING NAMED ARTAXERXES. THIS POSITION WAS ONE OF GREAT HONOR AND TRUST. ONLY MEN OF THE HIGHEST INTEGRITY ACHIEVED SUCH POSITIONS. IT IS ESPECIALLY SIGNIFICANT SINCE NEHEMIAH WAS A JEW. WHEN HE HEARD

OF THE CONDITIONS IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM, HIS SOUL WAS BURDENED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROBLEM. FOR FOUR MONTHS, FROM DECEMBER TO APRIL, THE BURDEN WAS HEAVY UPON HIS HEART. NEHEMIAH TOOK THE MATTER BEFORE THE LORD IN PRAYER AND THE LONGER HE PRAYED THE MORE IT BECAME APPARENT THAT HE DO SOMETHING TO RESTORE THE WALLS TO THE CITY. THIS IS ONE OF THE INTERESTING THINGS ABOUT PRAYER, AS WE PRAY, GOD LAYS THE BURDEN UPON OUR HEARTS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. (DR. HOWARD HENDRICKS TELLS THE STORY OF A BIBLE TEACHER OF A GENERATION OR SO AGO BY THE NAME OF LEGTERS WHO MET A MISSIONARY WHO ASKED HIM TO JOIN THEM IN PRAYER FOR A VERY SPECIAL NEED. THE NEED WAS FOR \$50. THEY GOT ON THEIR KNEES AND PRAYED FOR A CONSIDERABLE LENGTH OF TIME BUT THE MISSIONARY WAS NOT SATISFIED AND WANTED TO CONTINUE THE PRAYER. AS THE BIBLE TEACHER PRAYED, IT SEEMED AS IF GOD SPOKE TO HIM AND SAID, "WHAT ABOUT THE \$50 IN YOUR POCKET?" HE STOPPED THE MISSIONARY IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS PRAYERS AND SAID, "HOLD IT. GOD ANSWERED YOUR PRAYER." HE PUT HIS HAND IN HIS POCKET, TOOK OUT THE \$50 AND GAVE IT TO THE MISSIONARY. IT IS A DANGEROUS THING TO PRAY, ISN'T IT? WE SHOULD NEVER PRAY UNLESS WE ARE WILLING TO GET INVOLVED. NEHEMIAH WAS A MAN OF THIS KIND OF PRAYER. NEHEMIAH IS A PERPETUAL REMINDER THAT GOD IS LOOKING FOR MEN WHO SEE WHAT OTHERS DO NOT SEE, NAMELY THE DESIRE TO DO SOMETHING FOR GOD! THE FACT THAT THE WORK WAS DIFFICULT AND WOULD REQUIRE COURAGE AND GREAT PERSISTENCE DID NOT DETER NEHEMIAH IN HIS GOAL. UNLIKE NEHEMIAH, MANY OF US ARE DREAMERS BUT HAVE NO VISION. WE DREAM OF THINGS WHICH COULD BE DONE BUT DO NOT SEE HOW WE MUST BEGIN WHERE WE ARE TO GIVE GOD WHAT WE HAVE IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL FOR OUR LIVES. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID, "EYES THAT LOOK ARE MANY, BUT EYES THAT SEE ARE FEW." ONLY GOD CAN GIVE A MAN SPIRITUAL VISION. (COMPARE II KINGS 6:17) ELISHA WAS AT A CITY CALLED DOTHAN AND THE KING OF SYRIA SENT AN ARMY TO SURROUND THE CITY. NEXT MORNING, ELISHA'S SERVANT AROSE AND SAW THE CITY BESEIGED. HE WAS GREATLY AFRAID TO WHICH ELISHA REPLIED: "AND HE ANSWERED, FEAR NOT: FOR THEY THAT BE WITH US ARE MORE THAN THEY THAT BE WITH THEM. AND ELISHA PRAYED, AND SAID, LORD, I PRAY THEE OPEN HIS EYES THAT HE MAY SEE. AND THE LORD OPENED THE EYES OF THE YOUNG MAN; AND HE SAW: AND, BEHOLD, THE MOUNTAIN WAS FULL OF HORSES AND CHARIOTS OF FIRE ROUND ABOUT ELISHA." IN PROVERBS 29:18 WE READ, "WHERE THERE IS NO VISION, THE PEOPLE PERISH" OUR SUCCESS, EITHER AS INDIVIDUALS OR

AS A CHURCH, WILL DEPEND LARGELY UPON OUR VISION. GOD WANTS US TO CLIMB HIGHER IN ORDER THAT WE MAY SEE MORE OF HIS WORK AND DO SO WITH A CLEARER VISION. IT TAKES GOD-GIVEN VISION TO BUILD SOMETHING FOR GOD. GOD HELP US TO HAVE A VISION TO SEE THE NEEDS OF OUR CITY AND FAITH TO BELIEVE THAT WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT EVEN IF WE CANNOT SEE EVERY STEP ALONG THE WAY.

II. NEHEMIAH SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD THE WALLS - 2:11-13, 18

(*) IT IS ONE THING TO HAVE A BURDEN TO DO SOMETHING FOR GOD, IT IS ANOTHER THING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. (RELATE THE STORY OF A PASTOR FRIEND WHO HAS FOR THE PAST 10 YEARS TALKED TO ME ABOUT THE NEED OF A VISITATION PROGRAM IN HIS CHURCH. EVERY WEEK HE IS GOING TO GET STARTED NEXT WEEK. HE HAS MULTIPLIED BOOKS AND HAS TAKEN COURSES ON VISITATION BUT HAS YET NEVER INVOLVED ANYONE ELSE, INCLUDING HIMSELF, IN THE PROGRAM.)

A. NEHEMIAH TOOK THE NECESSARY STEPS TO GET STARTED - 2:1-8

RELATED HOW NEHEMIAH RECEIVED ARTAXERXES HELP. THIS WAS A WISE DECISION AND GOOD PLANNING. HE RECEIVED LETTERS TO THE VARIOUS GOVERNORS ALONG THE WAY AUTHORIZING HIS FREE PASSAGE, AND ALSO HE HAD AN ESCORT OF MILITARY OFFICERS AND WENT TO JERUSALEM AS A HIGH OFFICIAL FROM THE PERSIAN COURT WITH A LARGE BODY OF ATTENDANTS AND PERSONAL SERVANTS. ALSO HE HAD AUTHORIZATION FOR MATERIALS TO REBUILD THE WALLS.

B. NEHEMIAH INVOLVED HIMSELF IN THE WORK - 2:11
THE WALLS COULD NOT BE REBUILT WHILE HE WAS IN PERSIA. THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT REQUIRED HIS PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT. IF GOD'S WORK IS GOING TO BE DONE YOU MUST GET INVOLVED. (RELATE THE STORY OF THE CHICKEN AND THE PIG AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE WORDS INVOLVED AND COMMITTED.)

C. NEHEMIAH ENLISTED THE HELP OF OTHERS - CHAPTER 3
EACH FAMILY TOOK A SECTION OF THE WALL. WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR A FEW BECAME A REALITY WHEN EVERY MAN DID THAT WHICH WAS BEFORE HIM. (CHINESE PROVERB - MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK.) APPLICATION: TODAY IS TITHE SUNDAY. IT IS DESIGNED TO HELP GOD'S

PEOPLE TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET INVOLVED IN THE MINISTRY OF THIS LOCAL CHURCH. HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR MONEY ALONE. WE ARE INTERESTED IN INVOLVING EVERY CHRISTIAN IN A LONG RANGE PROGRAM DESIGNED TO REACH PEOPLE FOR CHRIST IN THIS CITY. WE BELIEVE WE CAN DO SOMETHING OF A SUBSTANTIAL NATURE FOR GOD IN THIS CITY IF WE CAN GET FACILITIES TO DO SO. IF EVERY BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIAN WOULD TAKE THIS RESPONSIBILITY TO HEART, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL. AS WE PROCEED IN THE PROGRAM, WE ARE GOING TO ASK PEOPLE TO SACRIFICE LIKE NEHEMIAH. WE WILL ASK OUR FOLK TO GET INVOLVED IN THE WORK AND MAYBE GIVE UP SOME LUXURIES IN ORDER THAT THE HOUSE OF GOD MAY BE BUILT. I DO NOT APOLOGIZE FOR SUCH PROCEDURE. MOST OF US HAVE SACRIFICED VERY LITTLE FOR THE CAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST, OUR TIME IS OVERDUE AND OUR OPPORTUNITIES MAY BE RUNNING OUT! HERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO INVEST IN A WORK FOR GOD THAT WILL OUTLAST OUR OWN LIVES. AS A MATTER OF FACT, II CORINTHIANS TEACHES VERY CLEARLY THAT WE PROVE OUR LOVE TO GOD BY OUR WILLINGNESS AND ATTITUDE IN GIVING.

III. NEHEMIAH ENCOUNTERED AND OVERCAME MANY OBSTACLES IN BUILDING THE WALL - 4:8

ONE OF THE PRICES TO BE PAID IN BUILDING IS THAT OF OPPOSITION. THERE WAS NO REASON FOR NEHEMIAH TO BE OPPOSED IN BUILDING A WALL. THREE MEN IN 2:19 SOUGHT TO HINDER THIS PROGRAM. THEY WOULD NOT GET INVOLVED, THEY LAUGHED AT THOSE WHO DID, AND FINALLY RESORTED TO OPEN CONFLICT TO STOP THE PROJECT. SOMEONE HAS MENTIONED THE FACT THAT THERE IS THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL THERMODYNAMICS, THAT IS, THE GREATER THE HEAT THE GREATER THE EXPANSION. HINDERANCES SHOULD NEVER BE THE TEST TO WHETHER A PROGRAM IS OF GOD OR NOT. I AM FULLY PERSUADED THAT NO GOOD WORK IS EVER DONE FOR GOD WITH MULTIPLIED OPPOSITION AND DISCOURAGEMENTS. THE MINISTRY OF OUR LORD HIMSELF WAS CARRIED THROUGH IN THE FACE OF MANY, MANY BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES. IN ADDITION TO HAVING TROUBLE WITH ENEMIES FROM WITHOUT, NEHEMIAH HAD TROUBLE WITH HIS OWN WORKMEN! THIS IS OFTEN THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM TO OVERCOME. THE PEOPLE BECAME DISCOURAGED MIDWAY THROUGH THE TASK WITH THE DIFFICULTY OF THE JOB. THEY DID NOT LIKE THE PROCEDURE OF HALF THE PEOPLE WORKING AND HALF OF THEM GUARDING THE WALL. IN ADDITION TO GROWING WEARY, SOME OF THE FOLK LOST INTEREST IN THE JOB. THE FACT THAT THE WORK WAS DONE WITHOUT WAGES

INCREASED THE PROBLEM. THE WORKERS LOST INTEREST AND LOST THEIR VISION. THESE MEN WHO HAD STARTED SO ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUDDENTLY LOST ALL INTEREST. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK, THERE HAD BEEN GREAT ENTHUSIASM BUT NOW, AT THE MIDWAY POINT, THE WORK HALF DONE, THE POINT OF SEVERE STRAIN WAS REACHED. NEHEMIAH KNEW THAT SPIRITUAL WORK IS NEVER EASY. NEHEMIAH HAD BEEN CALLED OF GOD TO DO A SIGNIFICANT WORK. THERE WERE THOSE NEAR HIM WHO DISTRUSTED AND VIEWED HIS EVERY ACTION WITH SUSPICION. THEY MISINTERPRETED EVERYTHING HE DID AND READ INTO HIS ACTION THE MOTIVES OF THEIR OWN HEART. BECAUSE THEY WERE DISAPPOINTED, HARDENED AND EMBITTERED AT THE TASK HE WAS DOING, THEY ATTRIBUTED THEIR OWN LITTLENESS TO HIM. THEY POINTED FINGERS, CARRIED ON AN EXTENSIVE CORRESPONDENCE AGAINST HIM ACCORDING TO 6:17. NEHEMIAH'S EVERY ACTION WAS REPORTED TO TOBIAH. GEORGE H. MORRISON HAS POINTED OUT THAT IT IS DELIGHTFUL INDEED TO WORK IN A WORK WHERE THE WORK AND THE WORKER ARE APPRECIATED. NO DOUBT WE DO OUR BEST WHEN WE ARE APPRECIATED, BUT THAT IS NOT THE TEST OF DOING A WORK FOR GOD. NEHEMIAH WAS NOT APPRECIATED BUT THIS DID NOT CHANGE HIS DEDICATION TO THE TASK. IT TAKES A GALLANT HEART TO WORK ON WITHOUT A SINGLE APPRECIATIVE WORD, SURROUNDED BY SUSPICIOUS EYES, BUT AS A MATTER OF FACT SUNNY HOURS ARE NOT THE TEST OF CHARACTER. OUR CHARACTER IS REVEALED IN THE MIDST OF MISUNDERSTANDING AND RIDICULE. WE NEED THE CONSTANT REMINDER THAT MEN MISINTERPRETED AND SUSPECTED EVERYTHING THAT JESUS DID! IT TAKES GREAT DISCIPLINE TO CONTINUE DOING A WORK FOR GOD WHEN SUSPICIOUS EYES ARE BENT ON FINDING FAULT AND CAST A CHILL OVER THE ENTIRE OPERATION BY THEIR OWN UNBELIEF. NEHEMIAH PERSISTED IN FOLLOWING THE PATH OF GOD'S LEADING. HE KNEW IN THE WORDS OF DR. LIVINGSTON THAT "I AM IMMORTAL UNTIL MY WORK IS DONE."

IV. NEHEMIAH COMPLETED THE TASK OF BUILDING THE WALL - 6:15

IN THE MIDST OF THE DIFFICULTY OF REBUILDING THE WALL, NEHEMIAH HAD LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT GOD HAD IN STORE WHEN THE WALL WAS FINISHED. GOD ALWAYS BLESSES THE MAN WHO WILL COMPLETE THE TASK TO WHICH HE HAS BEEN CALLED. THE 8TH CHAPTER TELLS US HOW THE PEOPLE GATHERED BEFORE THE WATER GATE AND FOR 6 HOURS STOOD AND LISTENED EAGERLY AS THE WORD OF GOD WAS READ BY EZRA THE SCRIBE AND AS 13 LEVITES WHO WERE SKILLED

IN THE EXPOSITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW EXPLAINED ITS MEANING TO THE CROWD WHO GATHERED BEFORE THE GATE ON THAT MEMORABLE DAY, THE PEOPLE ENTERED INTO A COVENANT AGREEMENT WITH GOD, WHICH THEY SIGNED AND WHICH THEY PLEDGED BEFORE GOD THAT FROM THIS POINT ON THERE WOULD BE NO INTERMARRIAGE WITH THE NATIONS AROUND THEM. THEY WOULD BE CAREFUL OF THEIR OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH DAY, THEY WOULD ALSO BE CAREFUL NOT TO VIOLATE THE USAGE OF THE LAND WHICH GOD HAD GIVEN THEM AND ALSO THEY WOULD SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF THE TEMPLE IN RELIGIOUS SERVICES. THE DEDICATION SERVICE OF THE WALL WAS A LONG CELEBRATION OF SINGING, PRAISING, GIVING THANKS TO GOD. CLOSING CHALLENGE: || OUR SITUATION IS NOT UNLIKE NEHEMIAH'S WE HAVE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD IN THIS CITY A LARGE AND LASTING WORK FOR GOD. THE NEED IS ACUTE. WE MUST EITHER GO FORWARD IN A BUILDING PROGRAM OR REVERSE OURSELVES, BEGIN A DOWNWARD TREND. (RELATE MY CONVERSATION WITH BOB SHELTON AT PONTIAC AND THE CONCERN OF THOSE PEOPLE FOR THEIR MISSIONARY BUDGET. HOWEVER, THEY WERE BEING UNREALISTIC BECAUSE THE TOWN IS DYING AROUND THEIR CHURCH. EXPLAIN THE PROBLEM - IT WAS EITHER MOVE OR IN 10 YEARS THEY WOULD HAVE NO CHURCH.) || WE ARE ASKING OUR PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED IN TIME AND IN FINANCES. WE WILL HAVE HINDERANCES AND OBSTACLES. THESE HAVE ALREADY SET IN. BECAUSE OF DIFFICULT DECISIONS ALREADY MADE WITH REFERENCE TO OUR LONG-RANGE PROGRAM, SOME WILL BE DISENCHANTED, SOME WILL COMPLAIN, BUT BECAUSE WE AS A CHURCH HAVE VOTED TO GO FORWARD THERE IS NO TURNING AROUND. IT IS EITHER FORWARD OR FAILURE. I HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT AS IN NEHEMIAH'S DAY THERE WILL BE THE JOY OF A COMPLETED TASK AND A HOUSE OF GOD DEDICATED TO THE SPREADING OF THE GOSPEL AT HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD.