

THE MARK OF CAIN

(written in the shadow of 9/11)

I John 3:11-16: *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*

In the context of the present terror the above passage continues to haunt my mind.

What is happening, and what is God saying to His Church?

In answer to the why question, we are told, *“Because his own works were evil.”* It is also written that Cain was *“of that wicked one.”* In a sense then, we are given a choice between two role models, Cain and Abel. Since they both had the same father in the flesh, we are also given a choice between two spiritual fathers, *“that wicked one,”* and God who is LOVE. The word, “poneros” here translated *“wicked,”* traces its root through “ponos” to “penes,” which according to Strong’s has the meaning: *“(to toil for daily substance); starving, i.e. indigent:-poor.”*

(Note: John 10:10: *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* The one who said this, also said, *“And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they, which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”* John 5:37-40

In other words, what we are reading about in Genesis, and on, is all about Jesus.)

Viewed in that light we are reminded of what God had said to Adam after the fall: Genesis 3:17-19: *“... cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of*

it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,..”

Notice the distinction that is made between Cain and Abel in their occupations: Genesis 4:1,2, 3-7, 8-12, 13-16: *“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.”*

At some point in time, they both brought offerings to the LORD: Genesis 4:3-5a: *“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.”*

GRATITUDE or "ATTITUDE"?

Cain tried to offer human doing, *“the work of his own hands”* to God, but human doing had been cursed as a result of the fall. Where attitude in connection with “offering” is concerned, human doing is born of either pride or guilt, and results in either pride or guilt. Righteousness cannot come from the law, from outer things. A focus on outer things, our own doing, can only produce pride or guilt, it can never produce gratitude or love. Cain was under the curse, but Jesus, *“being made a curse for us”* is *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:”¹

“And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”²

¹ Galatians 3:10-13

² Genesis 4:5b-7

“If thou doest well”: doest well is apparently the translation of a single word, “yatab” which according to Strong’s has the sense of a good attitude: “...happy... accepted... cheerful... content... glad... merry... sweet... “

In that sense we could understand The Lord's word to Cain as being: “If thou hast the right attitude, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou hast the wrong attitude, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. (note that “sin” in this context is given personification: “his desire... thou shalt rule over him.”

The New Testament perspective on this is well expressed by James: *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”*

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, (attitude) and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

16: *“Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”*

22: *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”³*

“... drawn away of his own lust...” The word here translated “lust” is a very strong word with very deep roots, perhaps the deepest of which is “thuo.” Again, according to Strong’s, the word has the sense of : “... rush (breath hard, blow

³ James 1:12-25

smoke) i.e. (by implication.) to sacrifice (prop. by fire, but gen.); by extens. to immolate (slaughter for any purpose): kill, (do) sacrifice, slay”

In that light then, we return to Cain’s problem: *“If thou hast the right attitude, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou hast the wrong attitude, sin lieth at the door. And your wrong attitude desires to have you, to carry you away to do its will, but you don't have to be mastered or fathered by a wrong attitude, you can take it captive, pull it down, you can master your bad attitude...”* Get a grip!”

Would that it were so, but instead: *“... Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”*⁴

“And it came to pass,” who knows how long that was, but outwardly, at least, it could have looked like everything was fine, that is, until they took a walk together. Our attitudes of heart can be well hidden until we go to do something with each other, then what is hidden in the heart comes to light.

“And the LORD said unto Cain, ‘Where is Abel thy brother?’ And he said, ‘I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?’”

It is quite possible to have that attitude hidden in the heart long before we ever get around to physically murdering someone. It's an attitude of heart that wants that person not to exist - would be very happy to never see or hear of that person again.

The Lord, however, will not allow that attitude to go unchecked. The Lord will continue to bring that person to remembrance: *“What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.”* (The territory of terrorists certainly has this look about it, but let's not be so focused on Bin Laden that we miss what God is saying to the Church)

“And Cain said unto the LORD, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.’”

⁴ Genesis 4:8

(Again, certainly descriptive of the post 9/11/01 graphics.)

But wait:

“And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.”

Where does this fit in to our present situation? Could it be that there is a better alternative than killing Cain?

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”⁵

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”⁶

First born sons: Cain, Ishmael, Jesus

Cain started out in life an only child, but he is certainly not the last only child who had a problem with: “... *imaginations, ... high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, ... thoughts.*” There would be others, perhaps most notably, Ishmael. Paul draws upon Ishmael's situation in order to make a very strong point to the Galatians: “*Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant (slave), though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.*”

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

⁵ Ephesians 6:12

⁶ II Corinthians 10:3-5

Wherefore thou art no more a servant (slave), but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?...

... My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.”

In Abraham's case, the two sons mentioned, had different mothers, one a slave and one free. Notice also that it is the circumstances of the mothers that made the difference between the slavery or freedom of the children. It is also possible to have two sons by the same woman, one born when she is a slave and one born when she is free. Take the case of Eve for instance. Cain was born first after Adam was ejected from the garden, and the ground was cursed for his sake. That rejection had to be a pretty big blow, a blow big enough to leave its mark. There is plenty of evidence that we are not over it yet. The fact is the only way to get over it is in Christ.

But, wounds do heal with time, and in time, she had another son Abel. It is quite possible that she had mastered the feelings of rejection by the time Abel came along. Keep in mind that Slavery is an attitude of heart, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”⁷

“Servants” is really not a strong enough word, it is “slaves” and its root is “bind,” to be bound. We are bound to obey our inner attitude of heart. Deprivation and rejection: the Devil's opportunity

“As a man thinks, so he is.” Or, as the author of Hebrews puts it, “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.”⁸

⁷ Romans 6:16

⁸ Hebrews 11:15

Somewhere else it is written, *“But sin, taking occasion (opportunity) by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”*⁹

In Luke it is written: *“And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.”*¹⁰

The NIV has it *“until a more opportune time.”* In the wilderness, the Devil tempted Him in a time of depravation, at the cross, the Devil tempted Him at the point of rejection. *“He was despised and rejected of men...”*

Continuing now with our quotation from Paul's letter to the Galatians: *“Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.”*¹¹

The covenant from Mount Sinai begets slaves. This is not just talking about the rules and regulations that are added by men. Works of the flesh, even those according to the “Law” are born of bondage, they come from being married to a husband whose influence is death; (Romans 7) for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life, and from being born of a different father, *“that wicked one,”* the *“father of lies”* the father of bad attitudes. Murder is an attitude of the heart.

“But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she, which hath an husband.”

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

⁹ Romans 7:8-10

¹⁰ Luke 4:13

¹¹ Galatians 4:24, 25

There is a great vulnerability in being an only child. An only child, a first child gets used to being center stage where the focus of his source is concerned. The desire to be or stay center stage is a big source of strife in the church, a very big source. It is fostered by role models that strive to be first rather than willing to be last. In the flesh, Jesus was the first born of his mother, and last born of the old Adam, and in the Spirit, he is the first born of His heavenly Father.

The man and the seed

*“And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.”*¹²

When Eve gave birth to Cain she said: *“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.”*¹³

God had said something to *“that wicked one,”* which contained an implied promise to Eve: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*¹⁴

“Her seed” would bruise the head of *“that wicked one.”* The way we are given the story, it is as though Cain was somehow passed over as the focus of the promised seed of the woman, and with the arrival of Seth, it is apparent that he is the replacement for Abel as that seed.

One is left to wonder how Cain might have felt about all of that. There are so many Biblical examples of older brothers who are jealous of younger brothers, and this echoes the experience of this present life as well.

God, the Father seems to have stood by, and gone along with all this rejection, whether the rejection of Cain or the Rejection of Ishmael, the rejection of Esau, and finally the forsaking of His own Son, who was also the *“first born of many brothers.”*

*“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me... ?”*¹⁵

¹² Genesis 4:25

¹³ Genesis 4:1

¹⁴ Genesis 3:15

¹⁵ Psalms 22:1

This is to say, there is no parental rejection with which Jesus is not familiar. He bore it all on the tree. Jesus is the redeemer of us all, including older brothers.

Perhaps we have said enough by now to make our application a little clearer. The two Jerusalems are two mothers, one in slavery, and the other free. The one in slavery bears children that are also in slavery. The mother who is free bears children who are free. To bring the application even closer to home, we could say that the two women represent two churches, one, childish, in slavery, and the other mature, and free. Their converts will reflect their attitudes.

Paul tells us “... *that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.*”¹⁶

To be childish is to be in bondage to the law, and to be in bondage to the law is to be childish. Elsewhere Paul tells us, “... *their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.*”¹⁷

The veil is the law

In fact, only in Christ is the veil done away.

*“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby”*¹⁸ *“... which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”*¹⁹

The veil is not done away in Islam, it is not done away in Judaism, it is not done away in childishness, it is only done away in Christ. Everything else is under some kind of law either Gods law, the Torah or some cultural standard by which our consciences either condemn us or approve us. Condemnation and approval, rejection and acceptance are foundational causes for our attitudes. From one perspective, the veil is an obstacle to seeing into the heart of a father. To understand a parent's heart, you have to be a parent, and this only happens by growing up. Religion retards growth, but life fosters growth.

¹⁶ Galatians 4:1

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:14

¹⁸ Ephesians 2:15, 16

¹⁹ Colossians 2:14

Paul was fighting the same kind of terrorism with the “*circumcision*” as we are fighting today. This war has torn the church apart. We must be rid of it, because to quote or paraphrase our president, “we are either for Christ, or we are for terrorism.” To be under law is not only to be terrorized, because, “*by the works of the law shall no flesh be saved,*” but it is also to be a terrorist: “... *he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*”

Or as Jesus put it: “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*”²⁰

Invitation to a wedding feast

When Paul was still a Pharisee he was killing those who were sent out by the King to invite people to a wedding feast, but more about that shortly. Legalism makes a killer out of you! Religion makes a killer out of you! Only in Christ are you rescued from “*that wicked one*” and reconciled back to your heavenly Father.

In the West, stoning is no longer legal, so religion is much more subtle: Malachi 2:10, 16: “*Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? ... For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.*”

We break faith with one another. We hang each other out to dry, we cover inner attitudes of heart, even “violence,” by putting on a “meeting face,” and we do not even do that very well. We mostly “divorce” each other. The word is “apostasy.” We put each other away.

We do it in the spirit, but when it's done in the flesh it looks like what Cain did to Abel. That the Body of Christ is so full of division is not an alternate life style, it is death. The destruction of the Twin Towers has given us a graphic preview of what it looks like when it comes to the full.

This is not so different from the murder of the two witnesses of Revelation 11: “*And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill*

²⁰ Matthew 23:15

them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” It's close enough to make the point, Hello?

The name of the beast is the number of a man. Eve said about Cain, “... *I have gotten a man...*” Relationship or fellowship based on law rather than Christ, is the mark of the beast. Don't let man do a number on you, it will only give you an attitude, and cause you to beget others with an attitude.

As Christians we need to know what time it is, and what we are looking at, and what God is saying to us. “*Repent!*” for our redemption draweth nigh.

“He who has ears to hear let him hear.”

“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them, which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.’

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, ‘Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.’”²¹

WEDDING GARMENTS THE LOOK OF LOVE

²¹ Matthew 22:1-9, 10-14

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”²²

What we have on shows up in our eye. We need to have the look of love in our eye, and it needs to be single so that our whole body will be filled with light. If we allow something else to get in or remain in our eye, some other attitude, then we will be like Cain: *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain,..”* The alternative to fixing our eye on Jesus is either fixing our eye on law or letting law get in our eye. To have law in your eye is to have a beam in your eye.

THE PLACE OF WOMEN A BEAM IN OUR EYE

So far we have been mostly looking at men as men, but what about the place of women not so much as mothers, but as sex objects. What does religion offer us in this connection? It offers us denial! The Taliban are a graphic demonstration of the place of women in religion. It throws a sheet over them.

Jesus Christ has set us free from the lusts of the flesh, not by taking away our hormones, but by showing us the point of hormones; *“Christ and the church.”* His answer is not to get rid of women, but to make their attractiveness to males a reminder of Christ and the Church. A reminder of a wedding feast. Getting rid of women is not very far from murdering those who are inviting us to the wedding feast. Religion concentrates on denial in the flesh, but Christianity is all about focusing on knowing after the Spirit. At least in this sense then, religion is the work of that wicked one, and Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil. Only in Christ is lust replaced by love.

Again, we need to get a grip, to get the point, not a sheet. At her most attractive moment, she is a reminder of what Christ is after in all of us who believe.

²² Colossians 3:9-14

TOWERS

The following looks at the place of towers, both in their significance, and in the significance of their fall. It is well worth looking at the full context. This just to say, that it is very important to know what God is saying, if anything in this historic wake up call.

“Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof... For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”²³

“And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.”²⁴

“And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.”²⁵

“The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers (Those grasping weapons): ..”²⁶

"Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole

²³ Psalms 48:12, 14

²⁴ Isaiah, chapter 30:25

²⁵ Ezekiel 26:4

²⁶ Ezekiel 27:11

land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”²⁷

"Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame. I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is

²⁷ Zephaniah, chapter 1:11-18

mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.”²⁸

A WAKE UP CALL AND ANOTHER CHANCE

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”²⁹

WHAT TIME IS IT?

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”³⁰

**A DIFFERENT TIME;
A DIFFERENT MARK;
A DIFFERENT APPROACH;**

²⁸ Zephaniah, 3

²⁹ Luke 13:1-9

³⁰ 1 Peter 5:17-19

**THE SAME OBJECT;
THE SAME PRIORITY:**

“And said to him, ‘Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.’ As I listened, he said to the others, ‘Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary.’ So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple.”³¹

Jay Ferris - 9/24/2001

³¹ Ezekiel 9:4-6