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Psalm Two

Larry Steers

Psalm 2 is a precious, beautiful companion of the first Psalm. The first three verses of Psalm 1 exalt the "blessed man", our Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's unfailing Son with all the inherent perfections and glories of deity. We rejoice in the declaration "whatsoever He doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). Isaiah declares the announcement from heaven "Behold my servant" (Isa. 42:1) while the writer of Psalm 1 reminds us that this servant is unfailing, the perfect fulfillment of the sweet savor of the meal offering. We delight to sing:

"With all His saints I'll join to tell
My Jesus has done all things well"

This "blessed man" of Psalm 1 is now saluted in Psalm 2 as God's King who embraces the magnificence of official glory and exaltation. The one who was crowned with cruel thorns is now seen with the diadems of heaven and enthroned to rule all nations.

God's unchanging purpose is a Theocratic Kingdom, a government by God. Such was His intention for Israel: God ruling over His people. But Israel wanted a king like the surrounding nations. They demanded that Samuel "make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). The response of God to Samuel was "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me" (1 Sam. 8:7). God's anger is revealed by Hosea who wrote, "I gave them a king in my anger and took him away in my wrath" (Hos. 13:11).

Yet it is God's undeviating purpose to have a King who will perfectly delight Him. We meet the King in Psalm 2.

Our Bible gives no inscription identifying the author of this magnificent Messianic Psalm. However Luke reveals the writer when he records the thanksgiving of the early saints, when Peter and John were released by the Jewish council. "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hath said, "Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things. The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ". (Acts 4:25-26), quoting the first two verses of Psalm 2.

How significant that the context of Acts 4 and Psalm 2 are similar. Peter and John experienced the raging of the people as the King of Psalm 2 has, still does, and yet will in the future.

One need not guess at the moment and circumstances in David's life when he penned these words. However, David poured out his soul's devotion to a man greater than himself when he wrote this prophetic Messianic Psalm.

This Psalm is quoted in the New Testament.

v. 1 and 2 in Acts 4:25 to 26

v. 7 in Acts 13:33 and Heb. 1:5, 5:5

v. 8 and 9 are referred to in Rev. 2:27, 12:5, 19:15.

Our study of Psalm 2 will be under five headings.

1. Rejection of God's Anointed; Voice of the World v. 1-3.
2. Response of Heaven; Voice of God v. 4-6.
3. Rejection of King Enthroned; Voice of the Son v. 7.
4. Rise of the King; Sorrow of His Enemies v. 8-9.
5. Requirement of God; Worship the King v. 10-12.

Rejection of God's Anointed; Voice of the World

v. 1-3.

What will be evident in the future has been manifest in the past. As indicated above, the early Saints, thankful for the release of Peter and John, quoted verses 1 and 2 in their praise of thanksgiving. But they applied these words to Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, who arrayed themselves against God's anointed. "Why do the heathen rage?" (v. 1), is not so much a question searching for an answer but is a positive affirmation that the heathen did rage and continue to do so. Our Lord looked to the conclusion of His earthly sojourn here with the words "For He should be delivered unto the Gentiles and shall be

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mocked and spitefully entreated and spitted on” (Luke 18: 32).

People and nations in our day are like the raging, angry seas in demonstrating their tumultuous agitation in their opposition to and rejection of God’s anointed. The world’s opposition is magnified as we near the end of God’s day of longsuffering. We sadly sing, “Our Lord is now rejected and by the world disowned”. The ungodly still rage.

Following the rapture, rejection of the Lord will rise to unparalleled heights. Never in the annals of human history will man, inspired by Satan, attempt to remove God and His Son from His creation and keep the Lord from the throne of David (Luke 1:32). There will be an answer from heaven. God will send a strong delusion that they will believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:11). The scornful language of Pharaoh will rise from the lips of men, “Who is the Lord that I should obey Him. I know not the Lord” (Exo. 5:2). A confederacy of nations will gather in rage and imagine vain things against heaven. We hear the ungodly say, “Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us” (v. 3).

Response of Heaven; Voice of God v. 4-5

“He that sitteth in the heavens” (v. 4), in the effulgence of Divine glory and absolute power viewing rebellious earth will respond.

He will laugh. How terribly solemn! This will be heaven’s response to weak, little man defying his creator. David again writes “But thou O Lord shall laugh at them” (Psa. 59:8). Solomon writes describing these moments “But ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh” (Prov. 1:25–26). What fear will fill the hearts of men when the laughter of a holy God whom they despised will flood their darkened souls.

“The Lord” (ADONAI – sovereign Lord) will have them in derision (mock them) and vex (trample) them. God’s forbearance and longsuffering has long been manifest. But now He will “speak to them in His wrath” (v. 5). He has dealt mercifully, graciously, and in love with men. But the recipients of His mercies have lifted up their hands in rebellion. The time of judgment has arrived. He will now pour His wrath upon the wicked schemes of rebellious man.

Rejected King Enthroned; Voice of the Son v. 7

God will set (install) His King by Divine appointment. “My King” is singular, there will be no usurper. When the Lord sojourned upon earth there was a Herod, an Edomite, with no legitimate claim to any throne.

There must be a fully qualified King to establish the Theocratic Kingdom. We have suggested here the voice of the Son, for this King will speak for and perfectly represent God. Only one man possesses the credentials to hold the scepter of absolute authority. His claim rests on the geneal-

ogy of Matthew, which declares Him to be a descendent of David. But also Divine purpose expressed by the angel Gabriel, “the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David” (Luke 1:32). Here the future expressed in the present tense indicates the certainty of the moment.

In a remarkable way Zechariah relates this event to the Lord’s last week on earth but secondly to what David has recorded in Psalm 2. At the commencement of the Lord’s last week on this earth the prophet Zechariah tells us of His last journey to Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9). Each of the Gospel writers carefully record the fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy (Matt. 21:1-9, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-31, John 12:14-15). A colt is secured and brought to the Lord on the Mount of Olives. “A very great multitude spread their garments in the way: others cast down branches from the trees and strawed them in the way (Matt. 21:8). The multitude cried, “Hosanna to the son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest” (Matt. 21:9). That short journey, again clearly prophesied by Zechariah hundreds of years before, took the Lord through the Kidron Valley, up to the gate of Jerusalem and to the cross.

Note that Zech. 9:9 was perfectly fulfilled. Now notice the words of Zech. 9:10, “He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth”. From the moment Zechariah wrote these tremendous words two thousand five hundred years and counting have slipped into eternity, but just as certainly as v. 9 has been fulfilled v.10 will be.

Again note that from the lonely isle of Patmos, heaven opened, and John saw a spectacular wonder. From the open heaven comes a mighty white horse. The rider is clearly identified for on His vesture and on His thigh is a name written, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”(Rev. 19:16). He is descending from heaven in absolute power crowned with the diadems of heaven’s acceptance. The warrior king is coming to tread “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:15). He will smite the nations and” He shall rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 19:15). His destination initially is the Mount of Olives. At His ascension the angels foretold this. “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). “In like manner” means that He left the Mount of Olives visible to men and will return to the same mount as, “the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west: so also shall the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:27)

Momentarily He will dismount the great white horse, for His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Again the prophet Zechariah writes: “His feet will stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zech.14:4). According to the prophet the geographical structure of the area will

dramatically alter.

Then will commence a journey to Jerusalem along the same path traveled so many years past. Not this time upon a colt but on the white horse. Not this time to a cross but to a throne for, “the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David” (Luke 1:32).

We gather at that time Jerusalem will be encompassed by her enemies and their language will be that of Psalm 2:1. But their rebellious attitude will very quickly change, for they shall see the Son of Man coming “with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). He will deliver His city and the profound statement of David will be fulfilled “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6).

Rise of the King; Sorrow of His Enemies v. 7-9

The omnipotent creator of the Heavens and the earth will “break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” v. 9. The rod of iron is in contrast to the reed men gave Him in mockery. To the Roman soldiers that flimsy reed was placed into the Lord’s hand in total disdain. A King with no army in contrast to Caesar’s scepter which ruled a vast empire and commanded the victorious Roman Legions. But the hand which held the reed will hold a scepter of iron (Rev. 19:15). The iron scepter stands for inflexible justice, which was unknown in Pilate’s court. It represents the laws of a Kingdom where there will be no partiality or prejudice in judgment.

Now the grand declaration is proclaimed from Heaven by the Lord (Jehovah), “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion” (v. 7). The Septuagint renders “the decree” (v. 7) as “the ordinance of the Lord”, which declares the universal supremacy of the Son. The Son is saluted, “Thou art my Son” v. 7. Here and eternally He must have the preeminence.

Our Lord never became Son in point of time. Son is a testimony in time to a grand truth beyond time, for “His gongs forth have been from of old from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2). “Begotten” in verse 7 does not relate to His birth.

Verse 7 is quoted in the New Testament by Luke once and in the Hebrew epistle twice. The context of these references indicates the significance of “begotten”.

Acts 13:33-34 suggests that the one who saw no corruption was raised as a prophet in Israel and is superior to David who saw corruption.

In Heb. 1:5 the sin purger is the Son who is superior to angels.

Heb. 5:5 is linked with the high priestly ministry and is superior to Aaron.

Psalm 2:7. The returning King to the earth is superior to all other kings and to all forms of human government.

The ways of Christ in the days of His flesh are the true pattern for His people.

Requirement of God;

the Acknowledgement of the King v. 10-12

The Theocratic Kingdom will be established. The eternal God has absolute confidence in the King and has delivered all into His hands (John 3:35). “All kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the Kingdom is the Lord’s and He is the governor among the nations” (Psa. 22:27-28). God’s King will be exalted among the heathen (Psa. 46:10).

In the first two verses of Psalm 2 wisdom has fled from the minds of men. Now to an earth that has manifested foolishness and rebellion God commands “Be wise” (v. 10). Wisdom is to flee to the feet of the King and pay Him homage. “Serve Him with fear” (v. 11). To “kiss v. 12 is “to lay hold of, accept correction, worship”. It implies total submission to His person. For the King, the Son, in His majestic greatness is the heir not only of the world but of the universe. These words imply acceptance of the Theocratic Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Men are demanded to be like the woman in Luke 7:37-38 who came with her alabaster box of ointment, weeping, and washing His feet with tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head and anointing them with the ointment. In this Psalm of the King the inhabitants of earth must be like this woman and “Kiss the Son” in devotion and honour. There will be no options available. There is a great promise to those who embrace and worship the King for “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” v. 12.

Those born during the reign of the Lord will have the Adam nature and will oppose Him. Rebellion will be summarily crushed as it will be shattered like a rod striking a potter’s vessel. This is perhaps foreshadowed when the Lord made a scourge and drove the merchants and money changers from the temple.

All believers love the hymn of Isaac Watts:

“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun

Doth his successive journeys run:

His kingdom stretch from shore to shore

Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

It is our wisdom not to seek praise of men: if, in our intercourse with saints, rather than look after a good name, we seek to approve ourselves to God, a good name will surely follow

R. C. Chapman

Josiah, pt. 3

Robert Surgenor

His Action

When a person is divinely awakened as Josiah was, there comes a change in their way of thinking, their lifestyle and their goal in life. This can be readily seen in the

young king. Considering the corruption that surrounded him, he begins to act and move with kingly authority. His peers had no influence over him, neither did the "religion" of his father Amon or his grandfather Manasseh. Josiah was a man of godly convictions.

Young folks, especially those still in the school system, seem to be greatly influenced by their peers. Others are influenced by sports or theatrical stars. People seem to have "idols" that they mimic or imitate. We also have more sensible people, but they too imitate others. They follow the path of their ancestors, whether that path was right or wrong. Did you ever hear that old-time religious song, "Give me that old-time religion. Give me that old-time religion. It was good enough for father and its good enough for me"? Well, there is a perfect example of one following their ancestors, whether they were right or wrong. In other words, you will find people that are followers, having no convictions of their own. They attend the church of their fathers faithfully, whether it is a scripturally correct place or not.

Let me ask you a searching question. If you are saved and in a scriptural assembly of God, why are you there? Is it simply because your friends are there and it seems the popular thing to do? Or, is it because you were raised by parents that were, or are, connected with a scriptural assembly? If you are in this category, you may find it very easy to leave a gathered out company of God's people when you become dissatisfied. If you have never had your own deep convictions as to such a gathering, you will find no problem in severing your connections when unpleasant conditions arise. Josiah was not of that character at all, he possessed very deep convictions, convictions that were from God Himself — and ACTION was the result!

At this point it would be good for all of us to search our own ways. Ask yourself, why am I in a scriptural assembly? Is it because I am convicted through a knowledge of the scriptures, that the gathering is ordained of God? Is it because I realize that the Lord has only one pattern for His people to function in assembly capacity, and that His pattern is being carried out where I am in the fellowship? Is it because I fully perceive the corruption of Christendom and the unscripturalness of clergy and laity? I would say that if you can answer all these pointed questions in the affirmative, that there is a very rare chance that you will ever abandon such a fellowship.

Josiah was a man, as we have stated, of deep and abiding convictions. It is one thing to have convictions, it is quite another thing to make them known, through ACTION! I have sadly witnessed believers that have possessed godly convictions, associated in an assembly that has begun to slip in spiritual principles. Instead of expressing their convictions to help stem the tide, they remain silent. One is reminded of five of the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2,3) and the inconsistency that was prevailing, yet seeming-

ly, those with scriptural convictions in those assemblies did not seem to be coming to the front with objections. They remained passive. Is this sin? I consider it to be so. Remember the words of Samuel the prophet. "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way" (1 Samuel 12:23). In other words, Samuel made it known that he could sin by remaining silent. Sometimes doing nothing can be classified as sin.

However, there can be the other extreme. Many years ago, I knew a man who saw an error in the assembly in which he was associated. He objected, and that in itself was fine. He made known his views. However, he was so distressed that he repeatedly made known his objections publicly. He was warned to cease but heeded not. Finally he was dealt with as a railer. This was extremely sad. He had made known his convictions to the responsible element in the assembly and he should have rested his case there. They knew where he stood, thus all the responsibility rested upon the elders, not him. How unwise for him to continue his ranting, week after week. He accomplished nothing. Let us be careful to make our convictions known in a humble, wise, and scriptural way and leave the rest with God.

It is most interesting to consider the atmosphere that surrounded the young king as he began to move into ACTION. The weeping prophet Jeremiah was on the scene at that time. God had said to him, "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.. Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth... they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain... they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. . . For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 1:8,9; 2:5,8,13).

We also find another prophet at this time, named Zephaniah. God said to him, "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" (Zephaniah 3:1-3).

Saved at sixteen years of age and going into action at a mere twenty years of age, what a courageous person Josiah was, considering the conditions of his day. What a testimony! He didn't just sit upon his throne delivering orders to others. He got very personally involved in the action himself. Notice the divine account. "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth

year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 34:3-7).

Josiah commences his purging by eliminating first of all, the high places. I'm sure Jeremiah would have been a source of encouragement to him. Such places had an interesting history in the nation. We find high places being used for the offering of sacrifices to the Lord in the days of Solomon in First Kings chapter three. However, in the days of his son, Rehoboam we read, "And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree" (1 Kings 14:22,23). Instead of bringing their sacrifices to God's appointed center, they altered His pattern by sacrificing in various high places.

Asa was a good king, and even destroyed his mother's idol, yet even in his day it was said, "But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days"(1 Kings 15:14). When Asa's son Jehoshaphat came to the throne, even though a good king, he too allowed the high places to remain (1 Kings 22:43). Later, even Jehoash, considered at first to be a good king, never made any attempt to eliminate the high places in Judah. "And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places" (2 Kings 12:2,3).

The list goes on, Azariah, Jotham, until we come to Hezekiah of whom it was said, "He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel" (2 Kings 18:3-5).

However, this noble king's son Manasseh was an evil man. Consequently, when he came to the throne wicked changes were made in the nation. The sad record states - "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD,

after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put My name. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of srael, will I put My name for ever” (2 Kings 21:2-7). How revolting! This was Josiah's grandfather. He reigned longer than any king, fifty five years, and even though saved toward the end of his days, when his son Amon assumed the throne "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did" (1 Kings 21:20).

Josiah could have reasoned and said, "The high places are not that evil. After all, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Azariah, and Jotham were all good kings and they allowed them to remain. To be reasonable, if I do the same, it will make it far more convenient for the people to offer sacrifices unto the Lord, instead of trudging all the way to Jerusalem." However, Josiah was not a man of human reasoning. He was a man of divine principles, knowing that God had repeatedly warned His people in Moses' day, "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee" (Deuteronomy 12:13,14). Josiah, regardless of cost, was ready to enforce the law of God relative to the place of gathering upon the nation. He was a man of ACTION!

To apply what we have been considering to today's conditions, we may say that we too have high places here and there. Such places may present the gospel acceptably and follow many divine truths, but when it comes to holding every precept of the divine pattern for a scriptural assembly, they fail. A hired ministry; a democratic or dictatorial government; a one-man pastor; the employment of musical instruments; the lack of the sister's head covering; the use of multiple cups and wafers for the Lord's supper, all indicate a coming short of God's pattern and can be considered high places. It is certainly not our position, in this day of grace, to destroy such places — perish the thought! We are called upon to simply avoid them. The call is loud and clear. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons

and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17,18).

We may have many lovely, well-meaning brethren and sisters in such places, yet let us remember this — God has a divine pattern and having been taught that pattern we are called upon to obey it. Let us "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). Thank God for scriptural assemblies, where the government is theocratic, being composed of a plurality of elders (Philippians 1:1; Acts 20:17); where the Lord's supper is carried out every Lord's day (Acts 20:7); where discipline is enforced and wicked ones put out of the fellowship, until they are restored (1 Corinthians 5:13); where sisters are veiled, and silent in the gathering (1 Corinthians 11:6,10; 14:34); and where only morally and scripturally clean saints are allowed into the fellowship (Acts 9:26,27; 18:27; Romans 16:1,2). Brethren, let us be careful to love all the saints, but let us also be careful to be only in fellowship where the Lord has been pleased to place His name. Josiah eliminated the high places!

The next thing we observe is that he made an effective attack on the groves. This particular word in the Hebrew language is "asherah." This could mean a Babylonian-Canaanite goddess of fortune and happiness, the supposed consort of Baal, or, simply trees or poles set up near an altar. The evil influences of Babylon and the heathen people of Canaan had always been a snare to Israel and Judah. Their false gods seemed to have a strong appeal to people that should have known better. Josiah purposed in his heart to totally eliminate such snares, not only in Judah and Jerusalem but even "in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali," areas north of Jerusalem. Paul warned Timothy, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:3,4). Josiah eliminated religious snares. Paul is not warning Timothy of religious snares, but he is warning him of a snare, the snare of being entangled with the affairs of this life. In other words, don't get too involved with the occupations of this fleeting life. It is true, we are in this world, but remember, we are not of it. Most of us, of necessity, are engaged in a form of employment. There are responsibilities of a temporal nature that need to be attended in this life. However, let us be very careful not to let such legitimate things become a snare. For example. I have a home and a yard. My lawn is to be kept in a decent fashion. My evergreens are to be trimmed occasionally. I have a responsibility to maintain a decent looking place in the eyes of my neighbors. However, if I decided to dress up my yard, decorating it in an ornate fashion with exotic shrubs and flowers that required constant care, and commenced to work for hours daily on my lawn to make it look like a golf course green. I would say, that my yard had become a

snare. In other words, the hours unnecessarily spent to keep up "above the Jones," could have been more profitably spent for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

When I was five years of age, my father bought me a Lionel train. That was great for a child. However, I once met an elder who purchased an HO train set and had quite a setup in his attic. While aged and infirm saints were longing for a little visit and a word of comfort, this so-called "shepherd" was up in his attic with a railroad engineer's cap on his head, a railroad scarf around his neck, engaged in running his little trains around the attic floor with an occasional blow of the whistle. What a snare! What a waste of money and time! Let us be honest and search ourselves, have we been snared by some of the affairs of this life? May God help us to be sensible and moderate as we use the things of this life. Let us be very careful to give the Lord the first place in all that we purpose and in all that we do. That is the secret of blessing! Josiah eliminated the groves.

Next on the writer's list comes the carved images and the molten images. It would seem like Josiah acted almost with a vengeance! He not only broke them in pieces, he made dust of them. Nobody would be able to come along later and glue the broken pieces together. He left no door open for a return to those idols. Not only this, he desecrated the graves of those who had sacrificed unto them. Then he went so far as to exhume the idolatrous priests bones and burned them upon their altars, thus defiling the place with their ashes. What a man!

Tracing the history of molten images, the first recorded one was fashioned by a man that should of known better. Poor Aaron fell while his brother Moses was up in the mount with God. Notice the divine account. "And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:3,4). There are a few things that I see in this narrative. First: Earrings are connected with idolatry. Sister, do you wear them? If so, why? Jacob had them in his family at Shechem, but before he returned to Bethel, the House of God, he buried all the strange gods with the earrings under the oak which was by Shechem. There was no returning to Bethel until cleansed of these abominations. Whenever you read of women being adorned with jewelry, they are away from God and in need of restoration. A careful reading of Isaiah 3:18-20; Jeremiah 4:30; Ezekiel 23:40 and Hosea 2:13, will confirm my straight-forward statement.

Second: God was entirely displaced in the minds and hearts of the people He had so wondrously redeemed. They were presented with a new redeemer — a golden calf? To turn the situation to our day, is not God displaced in many religious circles? Muhammadanism, Buddhism, and a host of other "isms" totally deny the Lord Jesus Christ as

the sole Redeemer of men. Even in some so-called Christian circles He is denied as being sufficient in Himself and in His sacrifice on the Cross to redeem men. People are told that good works, penance, prayers and a list of other things are necessary to obtain redemption. Yes, the golden calf still exists today!

Six times God through Moses had warned the children of Israel not to make a graven image. The warning went unheeded. The first recording of a graven image being fashioned is found in the Book of Judges, chapter seventeen. There was a man of mount Ephraim whose name was Micah. He seemingly lived with his mother. The account goes on to say, "And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:5,6). The sad thing is, in their total ignorance of divine principles, they actually were doing what they thought was right. We find the same today with many "religious" people. They are so far removed from the truth and totally ignorant of it, yet they are absolutely sincere and devoted to their "religion." They are doing what is right in their own eyes. Brethren, such a standard will never do in the assembly. When issues arise, it is not a matter of how I feel about it. It is not a matter of what the majority think. It is not a matter of what will be the easiest way out. Let me put it this way. We are absolute slaves bound to the Word of God. The only solution is, "What saith the LORD?" That is the all-important thing. God's word must be bowed to, no matter what the cost. Josiah had no concern about his public image. What he was concerned about was, cleansing the land for God so that the favor and presence of the Lord might be seen in their midst.

It is also recorded that "they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence." Baalim had obtained a footing in the nation after Joshua died (Jud. 2:11). Through the influence of Samuel the children of Israel put away Baalim, and served the LORD (1 Sam. 7:3,4). However, Baalim was established firmly in the ten tribes during Ahab's day. Jezebel's daughter Athaliah then introduced it into Judah. Thus for two hundred and forty five years the nation had been plagued with the worship of this Phoenician god, called Baal or Baalim. What a host of kings had not done before Josiah, the young king accomplished! Josiah did a thorough job of elimination. He was a man of ACTION. May God raise up more men in our midst with Josiah's attitude and wisdom, that we may continue to experience the favor and presence of the Lord in our midst.

Purpose in Pain. . .

Jim Beattie (copyrighted)

When we had a wood stove years ago, a farmer friend and his son supplied us with wood. One day when we were getting our supply for the winter, he cut down a tree that the township had given him permission to remove. It stood at the side of a gravel road all alone within sight of the wood lot where we normal got our supply.

Part of the enjoyment of those days was counting how many swings of the axe it would take to split a block of wood. That particular tree gave me a lesson I have never forgotten.

The young muscular son took the challenge on this tree and before a block of wood succumbed, we had counted one hundred swings of the axe. In the woods, the bocks generally yielded with just a few strokes.

In the overcrowded woods, trees were not exposed to the elements. They protected one another and a good many that reached up high for the sunlight, were flimsy, gaunt, and leaning, with little root or stability. Not so this tree. Its sinewy strength came from being served a smorgasbord of weather from the changing seasons. Sunshine, cloudy days, windy days, calm ones, rain, snow, ice, and storms combined to give it a balanced and wholesome diet.

While we don't welcome the storms and cold that bring heartache, King Solomon observed that "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Ecc. 7:3). Certainly it is sorrow that makes us think deeply, long, and soberly.

Another has observed that "Sorrow is God's plough share that turns up the soil in the depth of the soul that it may yield richer harvests."

And behind all the pain and suffering is a Divine Providence that will guarantee that even the evils that are initiated by unjust hands will work to our eternal good. Thus the apostle Paul wrote: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Hence, Jeremiah, known as the weeping prophet, encouraged patient trust, saying: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. 3:26).

"It is utterly impossible to work together with even true believers unless they are governed by the same principles so that they can pull evenly. It is often assumed now that one can join in Christian work with any true believer. . . . and if we take up associations in service with those who cannot pull evenly with us, the work will be spoilt." CAC

Prophets and Ministry, pt. 2

Joel Portman

Dual Prophets; Angel and 1st Prophet First Messenger in Judges

It is notable that the first divine message that Israel received after Joshua was through an angel of Jehovah (2:1). Angels are messengers of God, often sent on divine missions to convey God's mind to His people. Sent on such missions, their purpose may be to encourage, instruct, or to warn. The first such celestial visitor in this instance brought a dire message of correction and warning. Reminding the people that their distress was due to their own sinfulness and failure was necessary as it is for us as well. They were reminded of

1. God's Faithfulness. What befell them was not attributable to any failure on His part, for He had performed everything for them. They had been brought, by His power, into the land of plenty that He had promised to them. His Word had been faithfully performed. This would be true in every case.

2. God's Commandment. What He expected of them was very clear and understandable (v. 2). It was a simple, two-fold requirement: They were to have no close associations with the ungodly of the land, and no toleration of their forms of worship.

3. Their Failure. Clearly, they had not obeyed His voice. This may have been of slight importance to them, but it was the basis of their covenant relationship with Jehovah. Failing to perform His word was an expression of their disobedience to His will, and this put them outside the sphere of divine assistance.

Very simply, by way of application, the divine message is the same for us. When there are problems in our lives involving our failure in testimony, our lack of joy and blessing, is it not possible that God is reminding us where the source of the problem lies? Rather than blaming God for our dryness, weakness, lack of exercise, or limitations on our spiritual enjoyment, we should look at ourselves to see if there is disobedience on our part and a lack of response to our His Word. His correction is an evidence of His love for His people. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth," (Prov. 3:20).

Thankfully, the response at this point in their history was to weep (Bochim means "weeping"), whereas later in their history, with hearts farther from God and less sensitive to His indictment, they showed no response or indication of concern when similar circumstances prevailed (13:1). This suggests the gradual departure of spirit so that one can become insensitive to reprimand and unaware of the implication of one's condition spiritually. What a sad state to be in, but it anticipates what is fully seen in the conditions

of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22). These are conditions that are evident in our day, and they are indicative of the very last days of church history prior to the Lord's return.

First Prophet to Israel (6:8)

Once again, the Lord sent a messenger, this time a prophet (the first one after Moses), to deliver His Word. It is very notable that this prophet essentially reiterated the message of the angel. This indicates that whether an angel or a faithful prophet, if they come from the throne of God with a message, that message will not change. Paul warns the Galatian saints in Galatians 1:8-9, that whether he, any man, or even an angel from heaven brought them any other "gospel" message than what he had preached, they were anathema, under God's divine judgment. Why? Because Paul had preached the "gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1-2). It seems that today, there are those in the world who claim to be prophets of God, but the message that they are preaching is vastly different from the doctrine established by the apostles. Beware of and avoid all such; 1 John 4:1 says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world," and the Lord warned of false prophets even as Peter warned of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1).

There are those, even among believers whom we love and appreciate, who don't want and will not accept what they call, "negative ministry." If that is the case, it would demand the removal of a large percentage of God's Word! A major portion of the message of the prophets was negative, corrective, and not welcomed, even though it was from God and was what the people needed. This prophet attributed the source of their problems, even as did the angel, to their own spiritual state and lack of responsiveness to the claims of their God. The same could often be said of us in our day. To reject correct ministry, given by faithful and exercised brethren, is a clear indication of conditions that are descriptive of the church in Laodicea.

It is most remarkable that the word of this prophet, though the same as the angel, provoked no response from the people (Jud. 6:10). The history of the Judges, being an allegorical presentation that represents the church age, teaches us that with the passage of time, God's Word seems to have a decreasing effect on the consciences of the people. In Samson's day, they were, sadly, content to continue under Philistine domination without showing any concern. Do we realize that we also can become "hardened" to this kind of correction so that eventually it has no effect on our hearts or behavior? If we don't, then we are certainly deceiving ourselves. As they, we can also become so accustomed to a condition that is far from the Lord and His will so that we fail to desire any change, being satisfied to continue as we are, and without repentance. Again, such is the lukewarm condition of the church at the end of the age.

Dual Prophets:

Man of God and Samuel

God used two faithful men to predict His judgment on the house of Eli (1 Sam. 2:27-36, 3:11-14). The first was, apparently, a seasoned prophet of God who appeared out of obscurity, delivered his message of judgment, and then retreated once again. Of him and his history we know nothing, but our hearts ring with the faithfulness of a man who would come to reprove the high priest of Israel. However, his message was of a most solemn character. If Israel in general had been severely reproved in Judges, how much more solemn was the nature of this sad account that predicted God's complete judgment on Eli's family.

His message reminded Eli of the privileges of his position (2:27-28). It was, indeed, a very privileged position of great responsibility. The welfare of the nation depended on the proper functioning of the priesthood. Theirs was not only a privileged position, but it recompensed them through the offerings that were brought to the altar. Surely Eli couldn't complain of being deprived because of the work God had given him.

Yet, Eli's sin in preferring his sons above the Lord and in failing to respond properly to the demands and proper expectations of the Lord was going to result in his absolute rejection (v.30), the degradation of his family (v. 31-32), the death of his sons (v. 34), the replacement of his line with another (v. 35), and ultimately the depraved condition of the family (v. 36). Was that not a very terrible price to pay for his miserable failure to discipline his sons and to maintain the dignity of God's house and offerings? But he had terribly dishonored God in this way. He **KNEW BETTER**, but failed to act according to knowledge. He was responsible because of what he knew of God's standards. Luke 12:47: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Is there not a lesson for us in this? Do we actually fail to respond to the demands and desires of our Lord? Is it possible that we, as priests in God's sanctuary, fail to recognize the holiness of the sphere into which we are called? Could it be that we take our privileges lightly and esteem them so poorly that we know far more than we even attempt to practice? It is for us to ask ourselves these questions, rather than lightly and glibly go on in a pathway of accustomed disobedience to the Word of God, a pathway that will result in the Lord spewing this condition out of His mouth? (Rev. 3:16).

Samuel's Early Calling

Samuel, even as a very young boy, began to receive a message from God. We can see that in the very dark days of this phase of Israel's history, God proved that He was still capable of working to raise a faithful man who would discharge his responsibility even in an environment of un-

faithfulness. Samuel was the product of an exercised mother who wept before the Lord for a man-child that she could devote to the Lord. Samuel was not for her personal enjoyment; she knew the great need of the nation, and, recognizing that God could use a man who was yielded to His will and faithful to His Word, she cried to the Lord. God heard her cry and Samuel was the result. That child that you or I have has the potential to be another "Samuel" in our day, not to function as a prophet, but to capably use and apply God's Word to speak faithfully to His people. Perhaps this is what should burden our hearts in view of conditions that cry for God to speak plainly to restore His people by bringing a spirit of repentance to all of us.

Samuel's character had been formed in the home, before he was exposed to the evil influence of Eli's sons. What he had learned at his mother's knee was what preserved him, and her assurance of the value of such teaching along with trusting God to preserve him, allowed her to leave him at the tabernacle when he was weaned. It is what is imbedded into the heart of a young child from his mother that will prove to be invaluable in life to guard and to give guidance so that he or she might be an instrument in God's hand.

When God awoke Samuel in the night, and when finally Samuel responded to His call (ch. 3), the message that he received wasn't markedly different from what the man of God had said. He wasn't imitating the message of another, but he delivered what God had said and was yet saying to Eli. Again, God's message didn't change, regardless of who was transmitting it. However, it would seem that the message was a test of Samuel's faithfulness. It was not an easy matter for him to deliver this message to a man like Eli. Was he going to do so faithfully, or would he compromise the Word from God? He proved himself to be faithful in that matter, so that the result in v. 19-21, is that he grew and became an influence once again for God in the nation. His sphere gradually increased in its area, so that "all Israel. . . knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." Our faithfulness in the messages that God has entrusted to us will most certainly result in His approval or disapproval. Paul's exhortation to Timothy as a younger man was the same. He was to "study (be diligent) to show thyself approved unto GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (handling correctly) the Word of truth," (2 Timothy 2:15).

If there proved to be power in Samuel's ministry, the same was true also in men like Timothy. Paul called upon him to stand against error despite there being those who turned away from him as they did from Paul (2 Tim. 1:15), those who were teaching false doctrine regarding the resurrection (2:18), those who were resisting the truth (3:8) as well as those who deliberately turned away from hearing the truth (4:3-4). It wasn't an easy pathway for Samuel, nor for Timothy either, nor will it be for any man or women

who seeks with deep exercise before God to be faithful to His Word. We deeply need believers of this caliber at all times, so we pray that God will raise them to stand for the truth in local assemblies so as to preserve God's testimony in these days.

(continued)

Healing of the Paralyzed Man,

Mark 2: 1 – 12

Redmond Blair, Vancouver, BC

There are some precious things in this incident regarding the Lord Jesus and the healing of this man. It took place in Capernaum in a house, and we read that it was noised that He was in the house.

We see **The presence of Christ** and the effect that it had, so that people were drawn to this house, so much so that there was no room about the door. What a precious thing it is when the Lord is in the house, and surely this what we believe when we come together in the assembly, for the promise of his presence in our gatherings is vital.

In verse 2 we read of **the preaching of Christ**; we are not told what He preached in this house, but from the records in the gospels we read much of the preaching of Christ and its effect on those who listened. There were those who believed, but there were many who rejected the preaching of the Lord to their eternal loss.

The preaching was interrupted by the efforts of four men who brought the paralyzed man to the house, only to find there was no hope of getting inside. But not to be hindered, they went up on the roof and began to break up the roof, and to let the man down into the midst of the room where the Lord was preaching. It must have caused a bit of a stir when this man was let down before them all, verse 4. The response of the Lord to this act resulted when he saw their faith, for this man was helpless, bound to this bed and unable to move.

Here we have **the priority of Christ** when he said to the man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," verse 5. Some may have thought that the most important thing was getting this man healed and on his feet. He dealt with the most important thing, the matter of the man's sins being forgiven. Surely this is the priority in all gospel preaching to bring home to sinners the matter of their sins. At this point there were scribes there and upon hearing what the Lord said, inwardly they were thinking that this man was blaspheming, for who can forgive sins but God only? While this is true, they failed to see that the One in their midst was none less than the Son of God.

We have **the perception of Christ** as they reasoned in this manner, and He brought home to them that He was aware of their reasonings, and he was about to manifest, not

only that he had to power to forgive sins, but also to heal this man completely, verse 8. He brought before them the two great issues present, whether it was easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or arise take up thy bed and walk?

We now have **the power of Christ**, by His addressing the man, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed and walk, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed and went forth before them all."

So much so that they were all amazed, and here we have **the praise of Christ**. "They glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion", verse 12. Such is always the work of the Lord when he does that great work of conversion in the lives of men and women in transforming their lives and making them new creatures in Christ. There is a cause for praise and glorifying God when this divine work takes place.

I had walked life's way with an easy tread,
Had followed where pleasure and comforts led,
Until one day in a quiet place,
I met the Master face to face.

With station and wealth and rank as my goal,
Much thought for my body, and none for my soul,
I had entered to win in life's mad race,
When I met the Master face to face.

I had built my castles and built them high,
With their towers had pierced the blue of the sky,
I had sworn to rule with an iron mace,
When I met the Master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him and blushed to see
That His eyes, full of sorrow, were fixed on me;
And I faltered and fell at His feet that day,
While my castles melted and vanished away.

Melted and vanished, and in their place
Naught else did I see but the Master's face,
And I cried aloud, "Oh make me meek
To follow the steps of Thy wounded feet."

My thought is now for the souls of men,
I have lost my life to find it again,
E'er since the day in the quiet place,
I met the Master face to face. —Anonymous.