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Preachings from Daniel

Paul F. Nolting

Chapter 1

In Christ Jesus, unto whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, Fellow Redeemed:

How big is your God? Is He powerful enough to create this universe? If He created it, is He now the victim of His own creation, that is, the slave of what are called the laws of nature? Or has He power over nature and all creation so that He can control nature and suspend its laws and so work miracles? Is your God powerful enough to show signs, to work wonders, and to do

miracles? How wise is your God? Was He wise enough to create the heavens and earth? Does He know the future? Can He prophecy? Can He speak of things to come—centuries before they occur? How great is your God?

These questions are answered in the book of Daniel. They were answered at a time when believers needed reassurance, reassurance that the Lord God whom they trusted was actually in control and was able to keep all His promises. Daniel lived in the days of the Lord's indignation, when He poured out his wrath upon His own people because they had forsaken Him. At the beginning of their national history Moses had warned them of judgment to come if they turned from the Lord and disobeyed Him, if they turned after the gods of the heathen. As the end of the Davidic kingdom was drawing near, when Daniel was a boy, the prophet Jeremiah kept on telling the people that the Babylonians would destroy the nation and carry the people captive unto Babylon. Daniel was among the first to be carried off.

What did these things mean? Did they mean that the Lord God had abandoned His people, forgotten His promises? Had the Lord God unleashed pagan nations to punish His people and in some way lost control of the flow of history? The book of Daniel answers with a loud, firm "No!" The Lord reigns! The Lord is in complete control! The Lord is ever a present help in the day of trouble! The Lord knows the end from the beginning. He can foretell the future because He controls all history. That is the message of the book of Daniel. It is not an isolated message, but a theme of all Scripture. It is a theme that needed to be re-emphasized just at that time when the Lord was pouring His indignation upon His own people.

That same message is vital for us today as the nations of this earth contend for supremacy and threaten to destroy this earth. Who is in charge, man or God? The book of Daniel and all Scripture answer:

THE LORD REIGNS! (Ps. 47)

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD! (Ps. 46:10)

HE WHO SITS IN THE HEAVENS SHALL LAUGH! (Ps. 2:4)

I. He saves though He destroys in His indignation.

The year was 605 BC. The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had just selected as his rivals the Egyptians. King Jehoiakim sat on the throne of David. He had been made king over Judah by the king of Egypt who had deposed his brother, Jehoahaz, and had changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim. He was to rule for eleven years before Nebuchadnezzar would bind him in bronze chains and carry him down to Babylon. In the third year of his reign the dreaded Nebuchadnezzar came from Babylon and besieged Jerusalem. He didn't conquer and destroy the city; that was to come nineteen years later. But he did terrorize Jehoiakim and force him to submit, for "the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand." Nebuchadnezzar demanded and received, for the Lord so willed, some of the articles of the temple which he took and deposited in the treasure house of his god, Bel, in Babylon. What was the significance of this? For Nebuchadnezzar it was proof that his god Bel was more powerful than the Lord God of Israel, for his god had given him the power to take articles from the temple of the Lord and put them in the temple of Bel. For Jehoiakim it was a disgrace. But more: instead of leading Jehoiakim to repentance, it possibly confirmed his determination to worship the gods of the heathen around about. It must have appeared to him that the Lord God was unable to protect him and his people and city.

Nebuchadnezzar took more than articles from the temple. He took hostages, human trophies, as proof of his power and to establish his universal kingdom. He instructed Ashpenaz to select "some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans." Nebuchadnezzar took the very best of the youth of the land. They were to be trained to serve him in the new world order that he was

determined to establish.

Among those chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, whom we know better by their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. We have to realize that these four were young teenagers when they were snatched from their homes and their parents and taken to a far-off foreign, heathen land. Imagine the grief in those families, the tears that their parents shed when the Babylonian officers took their sons, and the fears for their safety and well-being. They were sure that they would never see their sons again, and no doubt they never did see them again. If the parents were God-fearing, as they surely must have been, they must have wondered why their God-fearing sons were the first to be carried off. The words of the prophet Jeremiah were being fulfilled in their children. But why was the Lord's indignation falling upon their sons? So those parents must have agonized.

But the reality did not conform to their perception. By moving Nebuchadnezzar to select these young men the Lord was snatching them from the city which was doomed and which would be destroyed when He poured out His indignation. Nineteen years later Nebuchadnezzar came again and destroyed the city with a tremendous loss of life. At that very time Daniel and his three friends held high offices in Babylon where Daniel was to serve in high government position for some seventy years. The Lord reigns. He reigns in the midst of His enemies. Be still and know that the Lord—He is God. He is able to save even in the midst of the destruction that His indignation brings upon a nation. There is always mercy in the midst of judgment. Remember that Noah was saved with his family from the flood, Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Christians from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70.

The Lord reigns; He is always able to save. But more—

II. He tests His own in the midst of His indignation.

Daniel and his three friends were sons of God-fearing parents. That can be seen from their names, all of which are compounds of God. Daniel means "My judge is God." Hananiah – "Gracious is Yahweh," Mishael – "Who is He that is God?", and Azariah – "Yahweh hath helped." The Babylonians changed their names, giving them names that were to honor the Babylonian gods. There was nothing that Daniel and his friends could do about that.

They were enrolled in a special school to learn Arabic and all the literature of the Babylonians so that they could serve Nebuchadnezzar in his universal kingdom. They were thus exposed to paganism, even as our children are exposed to evolution on all levels from kindergarten to graduate school. There was nothing that they could do about that either, even as there is nothing or little that we can do about evolutionary instruction in the schools today. But mastering the polytheistic, pagan literature of the Babylonians did not demand belief of the same, even as one can become acquainted with all the theories of evolution or the system of godless communism without believing as much as a syllable of the same.

But there was a third area where Daniel and his friends could do something and had to do something. Here is where the testing came in, for the Lord always tests His own. This is part of His education process for His own. Daniel and his friends were enrolled in what we could call a royal boarding school. They were expected to eat in the dining hall with the other students. The food and wine were the best. There was no complaint there. The question was whether the food was kosher according to the laws that God had given His people. Was the blood drained properly? Was all the meat from clean animals? There was another matter: The meat of the meals and wine were dedicated to the idols of Babylon. Each meal was part of a sacrifice.

Partaking of those meals involved the eater in the sacrifices unto the gods. This is the same problem that confronted the Corinthians centuries later. Paul discussed it in the tenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians.

Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank." There was more involved than just the ceremonial laws. What was involved was faithfulness to the Lord God of Israel who had promised salvation

to His people. So today: Faithfulness to every word of our Lord is faithfulness to the Lord who has redeemed us with His holy life of love and His innocent suffering and death for our sins against the command to love God and our neighbor. To us, eating unclean food or wine dedicated to an idol which we know to be nonexistent may seem like something insignificant. But no word of the Lord is insignificant. For us, for example, the word of our Lord, "Beware of false prophets," may seem to be a minor point which doesn't demand much attention. But the Lord who gave that warning is the Lord who loves us, who is concerned about us, who came into this world to seek us out, who lived day after day as we should live but don't live, who took the burden and the guilt of our sins in thought, word, and deed and paid the supreme death penalty for them. How can we, if we truly love Him and trust Him for our salvation, designate any word of His as minor and unworthy of our obedient attention? So also this matter of eating unclean food and so partaking of food dedicated to idols may appear to be a small matter, but it was the test for Daniel. Would he be faithful in small matters, in details? Would he treasure the word of his Savior-God?

The story reveals this concerning the Lord our God:

III. He blesses His own despite His indignation.

Judgment was falling upon Daniel's people. The storm clouds were gathering. Daniel and his friends had been snatched from the terror to come. They were being tested. The Lord did not let them down. He blessed them.

"God had brought Daniel into the favor and good will of the chief of the eunuchs." So Daniel brought his case to him, but the chief of the eunuchs feared for his life if Daniel and his friends would appear unhealthy in comparison with the others. Daniel then brought his case to the steward. He suggested a test. Let him and his friends eat only vegetables and drink water for ten days. Then let them be compared to the others. The steward consented to the test. After ten days the countenance of Daniel and his friends "appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies." The Lord blessed Daniel and his friends in their trial.

But more; "God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." They passed their examination before Nebuchadnezzar with flying colors, and they were given positions of honor and trust in the government. As a matter of fact, they excelled the other candidates by ten times. The chapter concludes with the notice that Daniel served in the government through changes of dynasties, conquest and re-establishment of the government until the time of Cyrus, who had conquered the Babylonian Empire.

Think of what these things mean to us in our day. We live in an age when all mankind is being terrorized by the scientific success in the art of weaponry. Both the USSR and the USA have the capability of destroying civilization as we know it. It seems as though there is no way to control these weapons. It seems as though there is no way to prevent little wars which always carry with them the threat of involving the major powers in a third world war which might well end all wars by destroying the planet. In all this it seems to many that the Lord God has lost control of the international situation and that He must be so busy that He can't possibly be concerned about individuals. But it only seems that way. The Lord reigns. He sits in the heavens and laughs at the plotting and planning of the nations who are determined to dethrone Him.

Think of the effort of the communists to deny the very existence of God. Think of the efforts in our own country to silence God through the democratic process. God laughs. He reigns: Be still and know that He is God. Be assured that He knows who you are. Be assured that He has power to save you no matter what the situation may be. Be assured that He will from time to time in one way or another test you. Be assured that He can and that He desires to bless you. Who is this God who does all this? He is the God who so loved us and all mankind that He sent His Son to live and die for us. He is the God who has committed all authority in heaven and on earth to His Son,

who has prepared a place for us in the world to come. Amen.

Chapter 2

In Christ Jesus, The STONE whom the builders rejected, Fellow Redeemed:

Shortly after the graduation of Daniel and his friends, as recorded in chapter one, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed and distressed him. He summoned all the wise men of his realm and demanded first that they tell him his dream and second that they then interpret his dream. The wise men protested that the king was demanding the impossible, to which Nebuchadnezzar responded by pronouncing the death sentence on all the wise men of the nation, which would include Daniel and his friends. Now recall that the special blessing Daniel had received was that he “had understanding in all visions and dreams,” (1:17). Daniel approached Arioch, who was in charge of the executions and pleaded for time to get the interpretation for the king. Then he and his friends turned to the Lord in prayer; the prayer was answered. When Daniel appeared before King Nebuchadnezzar, he emphasized that the God of heaven had revealed both the dream and its interpretation, so that Nebuchadnezzar could know what would happen ‘in the latter days,’ the future from Nebuchadnezzar’s time down to the Messianic Era, the times in which we live. In his dream Nebuchadnezzar had seen a great colossus in the form of a gigantic human figure whose head was of gold, whose chest and arms were of silver, whose belly and thighs were of bronze, and whose legs were of iron and whose feet were of iron and baked clay. Then as Nebuchadnezzar was watching he saw a stone cut without hands that was either hurled or that rolled and struck the great colossus on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then an amazing thing happened: The whole great colossus disintegrated and became as chaff which the wind drove away, while the stone became a great mountain that filled the earth. What did this dream mean? We can summarize it thus:

THE STONE THAT DESTROYED THE GREAT COLOSSUS OF THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, which

I. Is the rule of God through Christ.

Kingdom is not a geographic, but a verbal concept. It means rule. The great colossus symbolized the rule of man as it appears in history in successive kingdoms. The Stone cut without hands symbolizes the rule of God, as it was reestablished on earth by God's Son, who is symbolized elsewhere in prophecy as the Stone (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16). In the beginning God was all in all; His rule was unchallenged. Then came the fall of the angels and man. Sin entered. It set man against God, man against his fellow man, man against himself, and man against nature. The result was an endless historic sequence of anti-KINGDOM OF GOD kingdoms on this earth. They are symbolized by the Great Colossus which brings into historic focus the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The Great Colossus represented political man in rebellion against God. Who was to conquer: man or God? The vision revealed the complete victory of the Kingdom of God, whose King—our Lord Jesus—has reconciled man with God, man with His fellow man, man with himself, and man with nature by his holy life of love and his innocent death for man's unholy living. When rebel sinners come to faith in the King and thus receive pardon, when they receive power from the Spirit to love one another and be at peace with themselves, and when they are led to come to terms with creation, they come under the rule of the King. What was effected by Christ is being worked out here in time and will be completed in eternity. This rule of God in and through our Lord Jesus Christ –

II. Is opposed by the kingdoms of this world.

The Great Colossus symbolized rebellious man united in successive kingdoms.

Nebuchadnezzar was approaching the height of his power. He had defeated his major rivals on the world scene, Assyria and Egypt. He was to be the instrument in the hand of the living God to bring judgment upon God' s chosen people, the nation of Judah. But Nebuchadnezzar didn' t view himself as the instrument of the living God. He had his own gods, Bel and Marduk. He had transported vessels from the temple of the living God and had placed them in the treasure house of his gods. He had carried off the cream of the youth of the Jews and had given them new names reflecting his gods. Nebuchadnezzar was the autonomous man who was determined to establish a universal kingdom on this earth, thereby fulfilling the dream of Babel. All the art, literature, science, military power—the whole civilization of the Babylonians—reflected rebellious man' s effort to dethrone the living God. But Nebuchadnezzar learned that his dreams and ambitions to establish a permanent world order were doomed. His brilliant empire would be succeeded by another less brilliant: the Medo-Persian Empire. That empire would appear on the stage of history only to be replaced by the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. And the Greek Empire would be replaced by that of Rome. During this parade of empires, which we now study in our history books, the Lord God was preparing His Kingdom, quite unnoticed by the historians of the day. It would appear with an insignificant beginning during the fourth empire, the Roman Empire, but it was destined to destroy completely all the kingdoms of rebellious mankind.

Looking at this historic process from our point in history we can see this concerning the Kingdom of God, that it –

III. Has come, is coming, and shall come.

Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream a huge colossus in human form. Then he had seen a stone cut out without hands. The stone either rolled down the mountain from which it was cut or was cast, striking the iron and clay feet of the colossus with devastating results. The whole colossus disintegrated and blew away as chaff. When was this to happen? In interpreting this portion of the dream Daniel said: “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

When was this Stone to appear on the stage of history? It was in the future from Nebuchadnezzar' s day, but is it in the past or future from our present time? Daniel said that the Stone would appear “in the days of these kings.” What kings? Daniel was speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar whom he identified as the head of gold. From there on Daniel speaks of successive kingdoms which are represented by their kings. So during the succession of these world empires, which covered more than five hundred years, the living God was preparing His Kingdom. Think of what that must have meant to Daniel and his friends and all believers in those days. They were living in the days of the Lord' s indignation that would result in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the captivity of her people. They knew that all the promises of the coming Messiah and the establishing of His Kingdom were bound up in the house of David. But the reign of David' s successors was about to be brought to a close. It seemed as though there was no way that God could keep His promises. It seemed as though the promised Kingdom could never come. But it only seemed that way. Nebuchadnezzar had seen this mighty colossus of succeeding world empires. The Jewish nation did not come into view; yet the living God was preparing His Kingdom.

When the fourth empire, Rome, was at its height, the Son of God, the King, was born. That event went unnoticed in the annals of mankind. He grew up, walked this earth, created quite a local stir, but then was condemned by His own nation and turned over to the Romans for execution on the cross. The event was local—no big deal. It was rumored that He arose the third day, but nobody of importance in the Empire could verify that. It was said that He was still living, that He had ascended to heaven, and would come again. Just a few fanatics at the time believed these stories. The Roman Empire went about its daily business. But the Stone cut without hands had appeared on the stage of history; the Kingdom had been established. It continues to come—

unnoticed, unseen, yet real. The King has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. He is ruling. The citizens of the Kingdom know that—by faith.

He shall come again at the end of time. That will be the time when the Stone destroys all the kingdoms of this earth and fills the entire new earth that the Lord God shall create for His saints forever and ever. Just as it took centuries for the Stone to appear, so it is taking centuries until the Stone will be revealed for the destruction of all enemies and the salvation of all its citizens. It should be obvious then, that this Kingdom –

IV. Is not of this world, is non-national, eternal, invincible!

There are those that claim that since the four successive kingdoms symbolized by the great colossus were political empires, the fifth kingdom must likewise be a political kingdom. They look for this kingdom to be established during the alleged millennium, when the Lord Jesus is expected to set up a visible kingdom with Jerusalem as the capital. But that does violence to Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The earthly kingdoms are represented by a man-made colossus; the fifth KINGDOM is symbolized by a Stone cut without hands. Furthermore, while the successive kingdoms are represented in their unity by the Great Colossus, yet the interpretation reveals that they appear successively on the stage of history. But the fifth Kingdom existed in its pre-appearance stage with the four world empires, and it continues to exist in its pre-consummate stage simultaneously with the present representatives of the great colossus.

What is depicted here in symbols was expressly stated by the great King of the Kingdom when He testified before Pilate that His Kingdom was not of this world and when He previously told the earthly kingdom-seeking Pharisees that His Kingdom was even then within or among them. Sin caused the appearance of all the anti-Kingdom kingdoms of this earth. The Kingdom had to deal with that problem. So the Kingdom deals with reconciliation between God and man, not with treaties and alliances among men; with forgiveness of sin, not with power politics; with the power of the Holy Spirit, not with the power of nuclear armaments; with peace with God and among men, not with balance of power politics; with all the treasures of Christ given by the Spirit, not with the empty material promises of the kingdoms of this earth.

Furthermore the Kingdom of God is non-national. We have already observed that the Babylonians were to be replaced by the Persians who would be replaced by the Greeks who would succumb to the Romans. But the Stone, The Kingdom, is not introduced with the appearance of any one nation. We have already observed that the nation of the Jews does not appear at all in the dream, for the Kingdom is God's rule, heaven's reign among all people on this earth. The kingdoms of this earth rose and fell. None proved to be invincible. One conquered the other. In sharp contrast the Stone was both everlasting and invincibly powerful. It destroyed the entire colossus so that not a trace was left. So shall it be when the King comes again. There will be no history books of the nations to read in the libraries of heaven. There will be no rebellion to record. Who will be the beneficiaries of this new Kingdom? The Kingdom of God –

V. Is for the benefit of the saints who are its citizens.

Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that the Stone symbolizing the Kingdom that God would set up "shall not be left to other people." The other side of that is that its own citizens shall continue to enjoy all the benefits of the Kingdom. We shall see later that those citizens are the saints, that is, the believers.

Victory for the believers is a theme that passes through all Scripture. It appeared in connection with the very first promise of the coming King and His Kingdom in this form that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. That was accomplished by the King when He lived here on earth. All His citizens enjoy and share in the fruits of His victory. The same truth is pictured elaborately in the final book of the Bible, Revelation, where we are shown scenes of glory and bliss and power in the New Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Kingdom.

Think of what these things mean for us this day. The King settled the issue of sin by

covering it with His righteousness and atoning for it with His death. We citizens possess the blessing: forgiveness. The King took on and defeated Satan who is the power behind all the anti-Kingdom kingdoms of this world. We citizens reap the benefit of that victory, for His victory gives us victory over Satan. The King took on the greatest enemy, death, and overcame it by dying and rising again. No empire on the face of the earth has conquered death. Yet we citizens of the Kingdom have because our King has given us eternal life. Our King has given us security, for He has power over all things. Our King has given us peace no matter what happens in our lives, for He is the King of peace. Our King has given and will give us glory and honor that no earthly ruler can possibly bestow. We are blessed, for we are citizens of the King of kings, the Lord of hosts, our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 3

In Christ Jesus who is able to deliver to the uttermost, Fellow Redeemed:

Who doesn't know this story? It's a favorite of children, a comfort for all those subjected to persecution by kingdoms of this world and instruction for believers of all ages. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to fall down and worship the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar. That infuriated Nebuchadnezzar. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. He commanded some of the mightiest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. The three were dressed in their holiday finery. The fire was so hot that it instantly killed the men who were detailed to cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego into the furnace. The fall didn't hurt the three. They got up and started strolling about within the furnace, joined by a fourth person. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to gratify his desire for revenge. He looked into the furnace, expecting to see the flames consuming the bodies of his victims, but instead he saw the three walking about accompanied by a fourth who appeared to be "a son of the gods," not "the Son of God," as the King James Version translates. Nebuchadnezzar called the three out of the furnace. The king and the high governmental officials saw that the fire, which had killed the mighty warriors of Babylon, had not singed the hair of the three, nor burned their clothes. The only thing that burned was the rope with which they had been bound. There was not even the smell of smoke or fire on them. Truly an amazing delivery, one of the most amazing in all of Scripture! What truth does it proclaim to believers of all times? This:

THE LORD GOD CAN PROTECT HIS OWN AGAINST THE ANTI-KINGDOM-OF-GOD KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD!

Let us observe first of all that –

I. Kingdoms of this world at times demand loyalty of their citizens that conflicts with citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

In his dream King Nebuchadnezzar had seen a gigantic colossus in human form with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron with feet and toes of a mixture of iron and pottery. Daniel had interpreted this dream of Nebuchadnezzar as a series of world empires or kingdoms following one after the other. Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian Empire were the head of gold. This interpretation must have filled the heart of Nebuchadnezzar with pride that manifested itself in his constructing a golden image, possibly in human form, that was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. If it was of human form, it probably stood upon a pedestal, as does the statue of liberty. It may have been an obelisk like the Washington Monument.

What did this image represent? Without a doubt it symbolized the imperial might of Babylon as represented by Nebuchadnezzar. His gods had given him world-wide power; he was the representative of the gods on earth. He was the personification of the manmade one-world, the spirit of Babel. And he wanted to be acknowledged for what he was and what he had

accomplished. So everyone was commanded to fall down and worship his image, thereby publicly acknowledging their loyalty to him. We have here, what we would call, a mixture of state and church, of religion and citizenship. For the polytheist the command of Nebuchadnezzar was not at all unusual. They worshiped many national and tribal gods. Bel and Marduk of the Babylonians seemed, at the moment, to be the top gods since Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the world. So from a polytheistic point of view whether you worshiped one more god or not wasn't a matter of conscience and it was obvious to all that Nebuchadnezzar and his gods were at that point in history on top. The vast assembly didn't have to like it, but they had to submit on penalty of death.

But for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego the matter was not just a loyalty test. Loyalty they had given and could easily reaffirm, but this loyalty test took the form of idolatry, worshiping an image that represented the gods of Babylon and worshiping Nebuchadnezzar as the representative son of those gods. That they couldn't do.

It is the nature of the kingdoms of this world, especially when they appear in a totalitarian form, to demand a loyalty that is not just civil but also religious. The state becomes god, the greatest good. It demands the whole man. What Nebuchadnezzar demanded of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego was demanded of the Christians in the first centuries by the Roman emperors who also claimed deity. Loyalty was to be expressed by putting a pinch of salt on the altar dedicated to the emperor. The Christians were loyal citizens. They prayed for the emperor, but when the emperor made a religious act—in the form of worshiping an idol or recognizing the emperor as god, supreme on earth—a test of loyalty, the Christians had to say, "No." The government was demanding that which a believer can only give to his Lord. During the ten major persecutions thousands upon thousands of Christians lost their lives because they refused to submit to the demands of the state.

Let no one imagine that in our supposedly enlightened day such things can't happen. They are occurring all around us. The USSR is a secular, atheistic state. Why the persecution of Christians? Why the fear of the church or churches? Because it is the nature of kingdoms of this earth in their totalitarian form to demand total submission to the state, for the state is "god," even if the state denies the existence of god. We see the same thing in Iran under the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Let no one think that we in the USA are immune to such demands by the state. Many fear that secular humanism, whose god is man, has already become the religion of our country. The Moral Majority, leading the counterattack, threatens to impose their views on the nation. The IRS, the Equal Rights movement, which may demand ordination of women as a right, both threaten to impose demands that conflict with the Word and will of our Lord. If some of these things become law, they become a loyalty test. The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego may be relived in our lives or in the lives of our children. If that happens, what then?

II. Citizens of the Kingdom of God ought to obey God rather than man.

I am sure that you recognize this as a paraphrase of the words of Peter: "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). In that instance the ecclesiastical authorities in the temple had commanded Peter and John to refrain from preaching, but the Lord Jesus had instructed them to bear witness unto Him. So they were caught between the command of the authorities on earth and the command of their Lord. In such a situation believers have no alternative but to obey the Lord and suffer the consequence.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were in the same position. On the one hand they had the command of King Nebuchadnezzar: When the band strikes up, you fall down and worship my image or else. On the other hand they had the command of the Lord their God: You shall not bow down to any graven image! The issue was clear-cut. Either obey the Lord God or obey man.

The issue should be just as clear to us also. We are all citizens of this country. The fourth commandment demands of us that we obey the government. Jesus obeyed the government. The

Apostle Paul instructs us in the thirteenth chapter of his letter to the Romans: ‘Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinances of God, and they who resist will bring judgment on themselves’ (Rom. 13:1-2). Peter gives the same instruction: ‘Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good’ (1 Pet. 2:13-14). Those words are clear.

But each of us is also a citizen of the Kingdom of God. We entered that Kingdom by new birth (John 3:5). We belong to the King who bought us at a tremendous price (1 Cor. 6:20). Peter names the price when he reminds us: ‘You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Peter had heard from his brother Andrew that John the Baptizer had called Jesus the ‘Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’ That Lamb of God was ‘without blemish and without spot,’ for He had lived according to the holy law of God which demands perfect love towards God and equal love towards one’s fellowman. The innocent Lamb nonetheless died on the cross, forsaken by God and man, for the sins of the world. Through His holy life and innocent suffering and death He bought us. We belong to Him. We are citizens of His Kingdom. Our highest loyalty belongs to Him. We also ought to obey God rather than man. We note thirdly, that –

III. The conflict between the demands of dual citizenship at times causes a testing.

In the first chapter we observed the testing of Daniel and his three friends in the matter of eating unclean foods dedicated to idols. Where Daniel was at this time we simply do not know; it was his three friends who were tested. Their failure to fall down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar was reported to the king by their political enemies, certain Chaldeans who were jealous of them because they had received such high positions in the government.

Nebuchadnezzar fell into a rage when he heard that someone had disobeyed him, but yet he was going to give them a second chance. He repeated his threat of death in the fiery furnace and added a blasphemous remark: ‘And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?’ That was a direct challenge to the Lord God! The king defied the God of Israel, the living God!

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego told the king that there was no need for a long discussion. The issue was clear: It was a matter of loyalty to their God over against an idolatrous loyalty to the king through his image. But the three did take up the challenge of Nebuchadnezzar to their God. They asserted that their God could do the seemingly impossible. He could deliver them from the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, but whether that was the will of the Lord God the three didn’t know. Whether the Lord would vindicate Himself through their deaths or by saving them was His business. In either event they would not worship the image.

We know the outcome of the story, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego didn’t know the outcome. They didn’t know whether it was the will of the Lord to deliver them from the fire or by the fire. Right here is where the testing comes in! The outcome is not revealed till the testing is over. The testing may come to any of us in the form of a life-threatening illness or a crippling accident. It may come in the form of economic distress, the forces of nature, persecution or whatever. Whatever form the test may take, we know intellectually that our God can save us to the uttermost.

There is no situation that is too difficult for the Lord to handle. This story certainly proves that. But we never know what is in the mind of the Lord, whether He wills to deliver us or to take us to Himself. Think of the thousands who faced the hungry lions in the first century. The Lord could have delivered them as he did Daniel, as we shall see in a later story. But He didn’t in thousands of cases. He delivered them through a gory death. Yet those Christians were

determined to remain faithful to their Lord. So when the test comes our way, and it does come and can come in thousands of different ways, we are to hold fast to the Lord, confident that He can save us whatever dangers may threaten, always submissive to His will as to when or whether or how He shall deliver us.

The Lord can protect His own whatever their situation may be, even if they are caught in the grasp of some totalitarian anti-KINGDOM kingdom of this world. His word of promise still stands, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me' (Ps. 50:15). "I will deliver you!" That's a promise! It is a promise from our God who cannot lie. It's a promise from our God with whom nothing is impossible. It's a promise from our God who loves us with an everlasting love and who proved that love by sending His own Son to save us from a danger and a death greater than any possible danger or horrible death on this earth. God's Son has snatched us from the jaws of hell. He has saved us from an eternity of torment. Our salvation is secure in Him. He who so saved us can deliver us from any evil that may threaten us here on this earth. So when the testing comes for you or for me, let us follow the example of our three friends, confident that the Lord can deliver us. Amen.

(To be continued)

Exegesis: Psalm 98:1-9

Paul Naumann

Translation

- 1 A Psalm. Sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done wonderful things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.*
- 2 The LORD has caused people to know His salvation; In the sight of the nations He has revealed His righteousness.*
- 3 He has remembered His grace and His fidelity to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*
- 4 Shout to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth, shout for joy, and sing praise.*
- 5 Sing praise to the LORD with the harp, With the harp and the singing voice,*
- 6 With trumpets and the sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.*
- 7 Let the sea roar, and its fulness, The world and those who live in it;*
- 8 Let the rivers clap their hands; Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,*
- 9 For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, And the peoples with equity.*

Overview

Charles Spurgeon referred to Psalm 98 as a "coronation psalm." Indeed it seems to have a royal character, extolling as it does the achievements of God our King. Some have identified this psalm as the lyric for the decidedly more-prophetic psalm which precedes it. This passage also happens to be the one from which is taken the historic introtit for Cantate, the fourth Sunday after Easter, and it forms the Old Testament reading for Cantate in the Eisenach pericope. This theme of the mighty and miraculous acts of God is eminently appropriate for the Easter season, the time during which we dwell upon the greatest of God's miracles- the resurrection of our Lord from the dead.

Veterans of the Immanuel Tour Choir will remember singing the first four words of this psalm as we have them the Vulgate: "Cantate Domino canticum novum..." That piece is actually based on Psalm 96, but the initial words of this psalm are the same.

Psalm 98 is a homiletician's dream. It's overarching theme is the royal reign of our Savior King. It divides itself easily into three parts: "Vv. 1-3 recount summarily the royal acts of the Lord, for which a new song should be sung in his praise; vv. 4-6 call up the grand chorus and

instruments which are to produce that song; v. 7-9 summarize the effect of the Lord' s reign.¹My parts for this sermon will undoubtedly fall along these lines: 1) ACTION (God' s salvation), 2) REACTION (our praise) and 3) ANTICIPATION (of His righteous judgment). The homiletic possibilities are plain to see, and it is hoped that the participants at this conference may find the following exposition valuable in laying the groundwork for their sermonizing on the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

Verse One

מִזְמוֹר שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חָדָשׁ כִּי־נִפְלְאוֹת עָשָׂה
הוֹשִׁיעָה־לוֹ יְמִינוֹ וְזִרְעוֹ קָדְשׁוֹ:

A Psalm. Sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done wonderful things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

Denom. verb √שׁיר, *Qal impv masc pl; sing* [שִׁיר] שִׁירוּ

Denom. verb √פלא, *Niph part fem pl; be marvelous, wonderful* [פְּלֹא] נִפְלְאוֹת

Hiph perf 3 fem sing; save, deliver; help; give victory [וֹשִׁיעַ] הוֹשִׁיעָה

noun fem sing + 3 sing masc pron suff; *right hand, right side* [יְמִינוֹ] יְמִינוֹ

noun fem sing const + waw conj; *arm; shoulder; strength* [וְזִרְעוֹ] וְזִרְעוֹ

Grammar:

Apparatus: LXX has ψαλμὸς τῷ Δάυιδ at the beginning of the verse, though there seems to be no other support for this. Certainly aspects of the psalm do seem Davidic, but whether or not this is the case is of little consequence to the meaning of the text. To נִפְלְאוֹת עָשָׂה כִּי LXX adds κύριος as the subject. Both variants are supported only by LXX and may safely be rejected.

Masorah: In BHS you' ll notice a circle over the word מִזְמוֹר, with a note in the margin reading במטע ב. This is a masoretic abbreviation meaning, "Occurs twice with this accent." Also, there is a circle between the words שִׁיר חָדָשׁ, with the note ל, indicating that this two-word combination occurs seven times in the Bible. The note is correct – the other six occurrences are Psalms 33:3; 40:4; 96:1; 144:9; 149:1; and Isaiah 42:10.

Comments:

Higher critics make much of the fact that certain language in this psalm is similar or identical with a number of other psalms, and with several passages in Second Isaiah, particularly Isaiah 52:10: *The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.* Did Isaiah (or his redactor) copy from this psalm? Or (as is often suggested) is this psalm a post-exilic addition to the Psalter? Neither explanation is necessary. Certainly the Holy Spirit, in His inspiration of the holy writers, was free to use the same material more than once. Indeed, when it is seen that the subject of both Psalm 98 and Isaiah 52 is the same—God' s redemption wrought in Christ—the similarity in language seems less of a coincidence.

The psalmist exhorts his brethren to *sing a new song* to the Lord. Just as great works or important occasions in our secular world are often accompanied by the commissioning of special music, so the writer sees good reason in this case to institute the use of a new song. Of course, "singing new songs" is something many Lutherans don' t do very often. It behooves us, however, to bear in mind the fact that great deeds often inspire great (new) music.

For what reason sing a new song? *He has done wonderful things!* The word נִפְלְאוֹת, "wonderful things," denotes things which are unusual in a high degree, things which are far beyond human capabilities and which, therefore, awaken astonishment in man. In most cases the

term clearly refers to miracles and (of course) predicates the doing of the miracles solely of God, cf. Joshua 3:5; Job 37:5. So often we lose sight of what it is which sets our God apart from the pagan idols of every era – yes, certainly, ours is the only God who is and exists, as is often reiterated. But ours is a God who *proves* His existence, throughout history and in our lives, by His miracles.

Chief among the miracles: *His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.* The *arm* – and particularly the *right arm* in Semitic thought is symbolic of power (Ps. 89:26; Isa. 51:9; 53:1). The phrase הוֹשִׁיעָהּ לוֹ, *have gained him the victory*, has been variously rendered by the English versions, though most have something like the above. NIV alone renders ...*his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him*. The sense of that is unclear, though certainly salvation can be said to be both God' s and ours- God' s because He accomplished it, and ours because it was accomplished for our benefit. The sense is this: to God belongs the victory – which is the accomplishment of our salvation.

Verse Two

הוֹדִיעַ יְהוָה יְשׁוּעָתוֹ לְעַיְנֵי הַגּוֹיִם גָּלָה צְדָקָתוֹ:

The LORD has caused people to know His salvation; In the sight of the nations He has revealed His righteousness.

Hiph perf 3 masc sing; <i>know</i> ; Hiph: <i>make known, declare</i>	הוֹדִיעַ [יָדַע]
noun fem sing + 3 masc pron suff; <i>salvation</i>	יְשׁוּעָתוֹ [יְשׁוּעָה]
noun fem sing + 3 masc pron suff; <i>salvation</i>	גָּלָה [גָּלָה]

Grammar:

Apparatus: The Psalms were edited for BHS by H. Bardtke. In this verse, the phrase הוֹדִיעַ יְשׁוּעָתוֹ is bracketed with the letters "a-a". Bardtke' s note reads, ^{38a} frt add cf Jes 52,10," or, "This phrase may be an addition, cf. Isaiah 52:10." As noted above, it is characteristic of higher criticism that when two references in Scripture are similar or identical, scholars are strongly inclined to infer either that one author copied the material of another, or (as here) that a later redactor introduced material from another part of Scripture as an addition. Adherents of the doctrine of plenary inspiration, however, need jump to no such conclusion. Luther was once asked, "Do you really believe that a whale swallowed Jonah?" To which the Reformer replied, "Yes, and I' d also believe God' s Word if it said that Jonah swallowed the whale."

By the way, it is significant to note that the verbal forms in these first three verses are *prophetic perfects*, i.e., they speak of future events which are so certain of fulfillment that they may be referred to as having already taken place.

Comments:

The subject of the verse is the יְשׁוּעָה, *salvation*, which God has accomplished through the Messiah. Appropriately, יֵשׁוּעַ, *Jesus*, is also designated as the name for the Baby born of Mary (Matt. 1:21), *for He will save His people from their sins*.

God has *caused people to know* (Hiph'il) His salvation. "Make known" doesn' t do this term justice. Within the Hiph'il is perhaps the germ of the idea that the Lord will not only put the gospel out there, make it available, but will actually *cause people to know it*, will create faith in their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the sight of the nations He has revealed His righteousness. One commentator aptly pointed out that *salvation* and *righteousness* are a complimentary pair – you can' t have one without the other. I.e., without the righteousness which is by faith, salvation is unattainable. And here again the confessional Lutheran parts company with nine out of ten of the higher critical commentators, for they see *the righteousness of God*, in this verse and elsewhere, as referring merely to the righteousness which God has in Himself. That God has righteousness within

Himself of course goes without saying. With Luther, however, we have learned that when the term *righteousness* is used in the sphere of salvation, what is meant is not the righteousness which God *has*, but the righteousness which God *gives*, through faith in Christ.

This saving righteousness in Christ God has showed openly in the sight of the nations. Throughout the history of Old Testament Israel, the mercy of God was shown selectively to non-Jews like Rahab and Naaman. However, it wasn't until the day of Pentecost that the gospel of salvation began to be broadcast far and wide to the Gentiles.

Verse Three

זָכַר חֶסְדּוֹ וְאֱמוּנָתוֹ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל רָאוּ כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ
אֶת יְשׁוּעָתָא אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

He has remembered His grace and His fidelity to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

noun fem sing + waw conj + 3 masc sing pron suff; וְאֱמוּנָתוֹ [אֱמוּנָה]

firmness, fidelity, steadiness

noun masc pl constr; *ceasing, end*

אַפְסֵי [אָפֶס]

Grammar:

Apparatus: Interestingly, to חֶסְדּוֹ "His grace," LXX adds τῷ Ἰακωβ, "His grace to Jacob." This would lend an admirable parallelism to the first colon – "He has remembered His grace to Jacob, and His faithfulness to the house of Israel." Once again, however, I am loathe to adopt any reading which varies from the MT unless there is very strong versional evidence to support it. The Masoretes were more than a thousand years closer to the autographs than we are, and achieved a level of scholarship which I believe is far superior to any of our day and age, computers notwithstanding.

The following note, on רָאוּ, says, "Many manuscripts as well as the Syriac and Targum have וַיֵּרְאוּ, as in Isaiah 52:10." We have discussed previously the imprudence of emending a passage in order to reconcile it with a similar passage elsewhere, though in this case the witnesses are more compelling. It is well to bear in mind, however, the rules of sound textual criticism – one of which is that the more difficult reading (*lectio difficilior*) is to be preferred, all other things being equal. I.e., if in the process of textual transmission a scribe made an error, it is more likely to be an error which reproduces a more common reading than an obscure reading. By the same token, a scribe might rather be inclined, in a verse like this, to err in favor of a familiar form from another verse (Isa. 52:10) than otherwise.

Masorah: The small masorah has an interesting note on the phrase , "to the house of Israel." The Aramaic abbreviation in the margin reads, וכל יחזק דכות ב מ א or, "Four times spelled thus, and always spelled this way in Ezekiel, with one exception." And it's true: the three other references outside Ezekiel are Psalm 63:7, Amos 5:3 and Amos 5:4. There are 14 occurrences of the phrase in Ezekiel.

In other notes: the word יְשׁוּעָתָא ("salvation") occurs five times spelled thus, and the phrase יְשׁוּעָתָא אֱלֹהֵינוּ ("salvation of our God") occurs twice.

Comments:

The key which unlocks this verse (perhaps the whole Old Testament) is the term חֶסֶד, which I have translated *grace*. The LXX has ἔλεος, *mercy, compassion*. There has been tremendous scholarly discussion about this word, especially since it so clearly lies at the heart of Old Testament theology. Where you come down on חֶסֶד pretty much reflects how you view salvation in general, and the salvation of God's Old Testament people in particular.

The higher critics have always tried to make רַחֲמִים something less than what we know as "grace," i.e., the undeserved love of God, the *favor dei propter Christum*. Representative is renowned scholar Nelson Glueck, who in a landmark study declared that רַחֲמִים is nothing more than the quality in God that He keeps His side of a bargain (in this case His covenant with Israel). Glueck said, "The *hesed* of God, while it is not to be identified with His grace, is still based upon the latter, insofar as the relationship between God and people, structured by Him as a covenantal relationship, was effected by electing Israel through an act of grace. The significance of *hesed* can be rendered by 'loyalty,' 'mutual aid' or 'reciprocal love.' "

A reaction to this is found among a very few scholars. Catholic Hebraist Dom Sorg finds a meaning for the term much closer to *grace*; he favors *lovingkindness*.³ Katherine Sakenfeld dwells on Exodus 34:6-7 as offering tantalizing clues to the core meaning of רַחֲמִים. Exodus 34:6 [NASB]: *Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.* Sakenfeld posits: "The possibility of God's רַחֲמִים encompassing even forgiveness must always have been latent in the theological use of רַחֲמִים."⁴

To us, of course, this is to understate the case. We know from the New Testament elaboration of God's saving plan that, even if one translates רַחֲמִים as *faithfulness*, it can only be truly understood as a virtual synonym for *grace*. God in His very nature is love, and God is faithful to that part of His nature in that He shows mercy even when the recipient is abjectly unworthy of mercy. Indeed this is explicitly stated in 2 Timothy 2:13 *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.* God is merciful, God calls and converts filthy sinners who were dead in trespasses and wholly undeserving of His favor.

Clearly, a much closer study is warranted than the brief overview here provided. It would be particularly helpful to have the usage of רַחֲמִים examined in detail from the standpoint of confessional Christianity. I would be surprised, however, if the conclusions of such a study revealed anything very far removed from the impression I've gleaned so far, viz: if Scripture cannot be broken, and if the same Holy Spirit is speaking in the Old Testament as speaks in the New, then רַחֲמִים in most places is best translated as GRACE, with the full theological import of that term.

By way of contrast, there can be no uncertainty at all in our minds as to the meaning of יְשׁוּעָה. LXX renders τὸ σωτήριον, *salvation*. Alone among the English versions, the RSV (surprisingly) translates *victory*, reflecting the fact that some scholars see here a reference to military victory, or a backward-looking reference to the deliverance at the Red Sea. Given the messianic character of the psalm, however, it is clear that it is a spiritual salvation – eternal life – which is here offered, not only to the house of Israel, but to the whole world. *Acts 1:8: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Verse Four

הֲרִיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ פָּצְחוּ וְרָנְנוּ וְזָמְרוּ:

Shout to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth, shout for joy, and sing praise.

<i>Hiph impv masc pl; shout, raise a sound, cry out</i>	הֲרִיעוּ [רוע]
<i>Qal impv masc pl; cause to break or burst forth;</i>	פָּצְחוּ [פצח]
<i>break forth with</i>	
<i>Piel impv masc pl + pref waw conj; cry out, shout for joy</i>	וְרָנְנוּ [רנן]
<i>Piel impv masc pl + pref waw conj; sing, sing praise;</i>	וְזָמְרוּ [זמר]
<i>make music</i>	

Comments:

Verses 4-7 form the second stanza of this hymn, exhorting the earth and its inhabitants to sing praise to the Lord, and enumerating the ways in which – and with what instruments – this is to be done.

Notice again that the exhortation is all-inclusive: *Shout to the LORD, all the earth*. The glad tidings of salvation which Messiah would bring would be for all peoples and all nations.

The call in these verses is to shout, sing and make music. Throughout the section the exhortation becomes more intense and more specific, marking the particular instruments to be used in praise of God' s great salvation. Again, one gains the impression of a kind of spontaneity which is somewhat foreign to our worship experience. This verse uses the imperative forms of *רוע*, *פָּצַח*, *רָנַן*, and *זָמַר*, a piling-up of imperatives to indicate the urgency of the call: *sing praise to the One who has provided your salvation!*

Verse Five

זָמְרוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר בְּכִנּוֹר וְקוֹל זִמְרָה:

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp, With the harp and the singing voice,

Noun masc sing + pref *beth*; *harp*

בְּכִנּוֹר [כִּנּוֹר]

noun fem sing; *song, singing*

[זִמְרָה]

Grammar:

Apparatus: The word *בְּכִנּוֹר* occurs twice in succession in this verse. The editor notes that the second occurrence is absent from a few minuscule manuscripts of LXX, the Syriac and from Codex Parisinus Latinus (an Old Latin Psalter of the fifth to sixth century). This is interesting, but most minuscules and all uncials of LXX have the word twice, as thus: *ψάλατε τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν κιθάρᾳ ἐν κιθάρᾳ καὶ φωνῇ ψαλμοῦ*. There is no reason to adopt the variant.

Comments:

The *כִּנּוֹר*, *harp* or *lyre*, was a musical instrument having strings and a wooden frame. It is commonly associated in the Psalms with joy and gladness. Most of its uses in Scripture are religious (1 Sam. 10:5; 2 Sam. 6:5; 1 Chron. 25:1,3,6), though a few appear to be secular, showing the music of the harp accompanying feasts, etc. (Gen. 31:27.)

קוֹל זִמְרָה of course refers to vocal music.

Verse Six

בְּחִצְצֹרוֹת וְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר הִרְיעוּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה:

With trumpets and the sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.

noun fem pl + pref *beth*; *trumpet*

בְּחִצְצֹרוֹת [חִצְצֹרָה]

noun masc sing; *shofar, horn, ram' s horn*

[שׁוֹפָר]

Hiph impv masc pl; shout, raise a sound, cry out

הִרְיעוּ [רוע]

Grammar:

Apparatus: The editor notes that the word *בְּחִצְצֹרוֹת* ("with trumpets") is absent from the Syriac. On the tetragrammaton at the end of the verse, the apparatus suggests "dl m cs," short for *delendum metri causa*, "delete for the sake of meter." I.e., in the opinion of the editor the verse would be more rhythmic and euphonic without the word *יהוָה*. With no witnesses whatsoever to support the emendation, however, it may safely be rejected.

Massorah: According to the note, the phrase *שׁוֹפָר וְקוֹל* occurs three times. However, the only other occurrence I could find was Isaiah 42:14 ("...we will go to the land of Egypt where we shall see no war, nor hear *the sound of the trumpet*...") This is very unusual, particularly since G. E. Weil, the editor of the Masorah for BHS, was notorious for his attempts to reconcile the notes

of the *masorah parva* in Codex Leningradensis, the mss. upon which BHS is based. I.e., when a note didn't seem to Weil to add up, he often adjusted its reference so that it did. Presumably the adoption of the forthcoming new critical edition, based on the Aleppo codex, will remedy these inconsistencies.

Also interesting is the last phrase, **יְהוָה הַמֶּלֶךְ** ("Yahweh the King.") According to the masorah this phrase occurs twice. However, the concordance lists these two consecutive words with this exact spelling occurring six times. When you investigate, however, you find that only here and in Isaiah 6:5 does the phrase mean specifically "Yahweh the King." In 2 Samuel 24:23 the two words are in accidental juxtaposition ("And Araunah said unto *the king*, *The LORD* thy God accept thee..."), and in three Jeremiah passages they are a formulaic part of a different phrase ("...the name of *the King*, *the Lord* of Hosts"). So we learn that the Masoretes were sometimes concerned with enumerating phrases whose *concepts* were identical, rather than merely their spellings and word order.

Comments:

There is more enumeration in this verse of the instruments with which the world is exhorted to praise the Savior King. The first word **תְּצַנֵּצְרָה**, refers to a metal trumpet, possibly long and narrow. It occurs 29 times and always in the plural. In Numbers 10:2 it is described as being made of beaten silver, and Josephus says that it was "...in length a little short of a cubit, a narrow tube, slightly thicker than a flute." It was often used to summon the tribes or their leaders, or when it was time for an army to break camp. There are pictures of this instrument on coins of the Bar Kochba period.

By way of contrast, the **שׁוֹפָר**, *shofar* or *horn*, was short and curved, and made of a ram's horn. It's use was usually cultic, the blast of *a shofar* was the signal for Israel to approach Mt. Sinai. Every new moon was heralded by the sounding of a *shofar*. And of course, the instrument used in the downfall of Jericho was a *shofar*. It is also used figuratively – the watchman sounds the prophetic warning with a *shofar* (cf. Ezek. 33:3-6; Isa. 58:1).

Verse Seven

יִרְעֹם הַיָּם וּמִלֵּא תִבְּלַ וַיֵּשְׁבִי בָהּ:

Let the sea roar, and its fulness, The world and those who live in it;

Qal impf 3 m s juss; roar, thunder

יִרְעֹם [רָעַם]

noun masc sing **מִלֵּא** *fill, be full* + pref *waw* + 3 masc

וּמִלֵּא [מָלֵא]

sing suff; *fulness*

noun **תִּבְּלַ** = *bring, carry, lead, conduct* fem sing; *world*

[תִּבְּלַ]

Grammar:

Apparatus: The editor notes that several manuscripts of LXX have καὶ πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες in the final colon ("...and *all* those who live in it"). Greek mss. having this variant are the Recension of Lucian (died early 4th century AD.), Codex Alexandrinus (5th century) and Codex Veronensis (6th century). Additional witnesses supporting "*all* those who live in it" are the Targum and the Syriac column in the London Polyglot of 1657. Taken together, these form substantial support, but still not enough, in my mind, to justify adopting a variant which doesn't substantially change the meaning anyway.

Comments:

Here in the final three verses of the psalm, the writer turns from declaration (vv. 1-3) and exhortation (vv. 4-6) to anticipation. This section looks forward to the final judgment of God, the final effect of God's gracious plan for mankind.

As often elsewhere, even God's inanimate works of creation are urged to join in the paean of the Lord's praise *Let the sea roar, and its fulness*. This passage "...thinks of the sea or ocean

as one sees it from the shore when the mighty billows roll over reefs and rocks, and the surf comes in with tremendous thunder."⁵

If the first line mentions the inanimate, the second encompasses all the land masses of the world, and all the human beings which inhabit them.

Verse Eight

נְהַרֹת יִמְחָאוּ־כַף יַחַד הָרִים יִרְנְנוּ:

Let the rivers clap their hands; Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,

Qal impf 3 masc pl jussive; *strike*; with כַּף *palm* = יִמְחָאוּ־כַף [מְחָא]
to clap hands

Piel impf 3 masc pl jussive; *cry out, shout for joy* יִרְנְנוּ [רְנָן]

Grammar:

Masorah: the phrase יִמְחָאוּ־כַף occurs twice, here and (significantly) in Isaiah 55:11-12: *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* How interesting and important that the two events for which even the works of nature are said to applaud are the miracle of God' s deliverance in Christ (Ps. 98) and the miraculous working of God' s powerful Word (Isa. 55).

Comments:

Verse eight intensifies, if possible, the imagery introduced in verse seven – that of thunderous sound. It invokes the splashing noise of an active river (which we have seen can often be truly thunderous, particularly when a large river crashes through a narrow canyon).

The reference to hills or mountains is, of course, entirely figurative. Hills and mountains do not rejoice or make any noise – they are in fact known for their stately silence. That makes this passage the more striking. The coming righteous judgment of God is so marvelous that even the silent hills must burst into rejoicing.

Verse Nine

לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה כִּי בָא לִשְׁפֹט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹט־תְּהִלָּה בְּצָדִיק
וְעַמִּים בְּמִישָׁרִים:

For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, And the peoples with equity.

Qal inf constr + pref *lamed*; *judge, govern* לִשְׁפֹט [שָׁפַט]
noun masc pl + pref *beth*; *uprightness, straightness,* בְּמִישָׁרִים [מִשָּׁר]
equity

Grammar:

Here is one place where I' m tempted to emend the MT, at least insofar as the text division goes. לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה ("before the Lord") clearly belongs with the preceding verse unless some extraordinary ellipsis has occurred in this verse. It would be clumsy, e.g., to understand "[let them sing] before the Lord," at the start of verse nine, though this is just what NIV does.

In the last colon the editor of BHS suggests a rather gratuitous emendation: בְּמִישָׁרִים עַמִּים, adding the word יִדְּיִן, 3 masc sing impf from דָּן, "to judge." This would make the phrase "...and He shall judge the peoples with equity," which of course is much better parallelism with the first colon. There is no support whatever for the emendation, however. It is of interest solely to illustrate the license with which higher critical scholars are wont to treat the sacred text.

Comments:

This final verse looks forward to the culmination of God' s messianic plan of grace. The Lord *is coming to judge the earth*, which He will accomplish *with righteousness*. Not only that His standard of justice on the Last Day will be one of righteousness, but also that the righteousness of Christ, which alone avails before God, will itself form the standard. This will apply both for the saved (John 5:24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*), and for the damned (John 12:48 *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*).

What a prospect! What a reason for Christians to rejoice with all nature! Indeed, the coming cataclysm of Judgment Day, far from inspiring foreboding and dread, should make believers of every walk rejoice. During this Eastertide, as we New Testament Christians rejoice in our Savior' s resurrection and look forward to His second advent, it is entirely appropriate that we, too, banish gloom and sadness. Let us find our rightful place in Psalm 98, and join all of creation in bursting forth in joyful praise of our God!

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Notes

¹ Lenski, 532.

² Glueck, 102.

³ Sorg, 10.

⁴ Sakenfeld, 119.

⁵ Lenski, 543.

Church History from 1066 AD: The Struggle Between Church and State

Mark Gurath

Introduction

In our previous installment (see the March 2002 issue of the *Journal of Theology*), the writer traced the “Missionary efforts of the Christian Church to Western border lands of the Roman Empire,” taking place in the years between 590 and 1066 AD. The path of the gospel was traced as it made its way through the various border countries of the west, until the time of the Norman invasion of 1066 when Rome finally drew the whole church into her fold.

This paper brings into consideration the period of time which follows, beginning roughly with AD 1075, continuing up until AD 1122. Our attention is directed to the struggle between church and state, namely between pope and emperor. The struggle centers around the two individuals who held the offices of pope and emperor, Gregory VII and Henry IV respectively. The point at which this period of time, sometimes known as the “Age of Gregorian Reform” or the “Investiture Struggle,” begins is not agreed upon. The end point of this struggle is clearly agreed to be in AD 1122, with the Concordat of Worms.

I. A Time of Prosperity

“The mid-eleventh century was a springtime for Europe. The worst phase of the Viking raids from the north, and the Saracens from the south, was over; western Christendom was no longer a sandwich about to be devoured between barbarous and infidel fangs, but an expanding society. . . . There was an increase in books and learning, and also in literacy, which meant an expansion of the clergy. Old records, and claims, were being reexamined, and forgotten texts brought back into use.”¹ Christian society was expanding, and enjoying a certain amount of prosperity. “The mere fact that Latin Europe could raise, arm, mount, and send forth the multitude of the First Crusade in 1096 is impressive evidence of the striking increase in that area’s population and wealth. It demonstrates the dramatically high ‘energy level’ of eleventh century European society.”²

Society was enjoying expansion and prosperity. The question is now, “Who is in control?” Up until this time the secular and spiritual authorities had coexisted, and church and state ruled in harmony. This harmony was based on the Pope’s acceptance of the superior status of the monarch as a ruler of the people. That was about to change. The harmony and peace which allowed church and state to coexist was shattered by the ideas of reform which a man named Hildebrand (a.k.a. Pope Gregory VII) brought forth.

II. Conflict Between Secular and Spiritual Authority

“The Age of Gregorian Reform” or “The Investiture Struggle”

Why all of a sudden did such change come to the once peaceful relationship between church and state? The answer is Pope Gregory VII. He came to the Papal office in 1073, remaining there until 1085. Taking office, he set out to purify the entire church, and radically change the way things worked. “The main purpose of Gregory VII in the early years of his Papacy was that the church should be properly governed, and therefore that the right men should be appointed to hold office and have the cure of souls.”³ The struggle which ensued between pope and emperor was all

about who gets to make appointments to church positions, such as bishop, archbishop, etc. Both Gregory VII, and King Henry IV wanted this power.

Pope Gregory got things started with a decree which would prove to define the Papacy and its powers indefinitely. In his *Dictatus Papae*, Gregory outlined the purpose of the Papal office and its powers with 27 affirmations. Some that are included are these: 'the Roman church was founded by God; the Roman Pontiff alone deserves the title 'universal'; he alone can depose or reinstate bishops; he alone may use the imperial insignia; he is the only man whose feet princes must kiss; he can depose emperors; he may transfer a bishop from one see to another; he may divide rich bishoprics and unite the poor ones; he has the power to ordain a cleric of any church and he who is ordained by him may not receive a higher grade from any other bishop; no synod can be called general without his authorization; a sentence passed by him cannot be reversed by any one except himself; he may be judged by no one; to him should be referred the important cases of every church; the Roman Church has never erred, nor will it err to all eternity; he who is not at peace with the Roman Church shall not be considered Catholic; the Roman Pontiff may absolve subjects from their allegiance to wicked men."⁴ The points contained in this decree were not necessarily new, but they had never before been stated so clearly in one document. What's more, he not only made a decree and expected it to be carried out by those under his "command," but he saw to it that it was enforced. He "compelled archbishops to come to Rome to receive the pallium as the mark of their office and to maintain contact with the Holy See. . . .He not only sent out legates on special missions, as had his predecessors, but he also appointed some men to be his resident representatives in particular regions and countries, thus ensuring closer supervision from Rome and the enforcement of the Papal edicts."⁵ Not being satisfied with the current status of the Church he also made efforts to bring the newly converted countries of Denmark, Norway, and Poland under the control of Rome.

This of course outraged the Emperor, Henry IV. The contest between these two leaders really centered around the monarchy and its place in the Christian society. Historically, the emperor was, to all intents and purposes, the head of the church in his empire. 'The German emperors, like their Frankish predecessors, ran their territories through state bishops, archbishops and abbots, whom they appointed and judged. The system was essentially the same in Spain, England and France. The ruler was, in effect, the head of the church."⁶ Note carefully that they appointed and judged the ones who would take up these spiritual offices. According to the Pope's decree, he (the Pope) alone had the power to appoint and control these bishops, since he was put in that position by God Himself.

Historically, the monarchy was viewed as being received by divine right. Gregory took up arms against this very idea. He sought separation of Church from the State, which meant a complete change of the king's position in Christian society. The age-old doctrine was this: kings were sent by God as leaders of the righteous or as a scourge for the wicked. To get an idea of what was historically believed and what Gregory attempted to change, listen to the words of a critic of Pope Gregory VII. 'Christ alone, in unison with God, can give or take away dominion, according to the Scriptures; but Hildebrand teaches that he himself has authority over kings and kingdoms, and can do that which, according to the Psalmist, can be done by God alone, who abases the one and elevates the other."⁷

The lines have been drawn. King Henry believes that he has the authority to appoint and judge bishops, because he has been put in his position by none other than God Himself. Pope Gregory has declared that God has established the Church, and that the Roman Pontiff is the head of it, therefore having all authority within the Church. There existed in this struggle a blurring of the lines between where the Church began and where the State took over. The balance which allowed both church and state to exist together from this time on would be disrupted. The king did indeed have a claim to the throne and accurately stated that he had been put there by God, claiming the authority to judge and appoint. Some of Gregory's claims were more in the political sphere, declaring that the king should be the result of an election, which the Pope would need to

confirm.

Where “the rubber meets the road” in this controversy was in the ceremony of lay investiture. By definition investiture is “a formal investing as with an office, power, or authority, often with appropriate symbols or robes.” Lay investiture then involved the king granting authority to an individual, such as a bishop, as opposed to the Pope or those in the church having the right to do this. Gregory took a shot at abolishing this ceremony in 1075, at which time he decreed it to be abolished. The ceremony involved the Emperor being vested with ring and staff, appointing a bishop or other official to office. The ceremony is described in this way. “The order of the royal coronations was strikingly similar to that used for the consecration of a bishop. Both began with a ritual procession of the elect to the church, preceded by relics; there was an identical formal interrogation to ensure the orthodoxy of the bishop/king. There then followed the unction of the head, breast, shoulders, upper arms and hand (in case of the king) and of head and arms (in the case of the bishop). Both were then invested with ring and staff, the king getting, in addition, the sword of state, pallium, bracelets and sceptre. Both ceremonies concluded with the kiss of peace and high mass.”⁸ By doing away with this ceremony, Gregory sought to take away the authority which was vested in the king. This ceremony, he said, portrayed the laity having control over spiritual affairs.

The Investiture struggle was on. A clear showing of this struggle made itself apparent over the arch bishopric of Milan. In 1075, a synod at Rome came out against lay investiture, thus taking Henry out of the bishop-appointing procedure. Later that same year, Henry appointed an archbishop to Milan. In 1076, Henry IV denounced Pope Gregory VII as “not Pope, but false monk.” He demanded that Gregory give up the Papal throne. Gregory reacted to this by deposing Henry not more than a month later, “forbidding any one to serve him as king, and anathematizing him.”⁹

Gregory’s action against Henry seemed to have won him the victory. “In January of 1077 the humbled king came to meet Pope Gregory at Canossa (in the Alps). There he waited three days in the snow as a penitent sinner. Finally, since Christ’s vicar must forgive the penitent, Gregory lifted the excommunication; but did not restore Henry to the throne.”¹⁰ This course of events, including the dramatic scene at Canossa, proved to be only the beginning of a back and forth struggle between King and Pope. “In spite and in part because of the startling episode at Canossa, Henry IV emerged victor. To be sure, Henry’s enemies in Germany rose in revolt and elected a rival king, and in 1080 Gregory, reluctantly taking sides, again declared Henry deposed. But Henry had a synod pronounce Hildebrand deposed and elect a Pope in his place, invaded Italy, entered Rome, and had him whom he had made Pope crown him Emperor (1084), while Gregory VII, still unyielding, helplessly kept within the walls of the castle of San Angelo in Rome. Normans from the south came to Gregory’s relief, took Rome, and carried him off with them (1084). The following year (1085) Hildebrand died in exile at Salerno,”¹¹ The struggle raged on, with the followers of Gregory continuing their attempts at reform, and Henry and his followers trying to retain power.

III. The Concordat at Worms

There really was no victor in the investiture struggle. The end of the struggle came with the Concordat of Worms, on Sept. 23, 1122. While Henry IV and Gregory VII had passed on, the struggle which they started had continued up to that point. The agreement was ratified by Henry V and Pope Calixtus II. “Calixtus II’s concession to Henry V at Worms was a carefully drawn legal document. In return for Henry’s renunciation of investiture, it recognizes the king’s share in the elections of German bishops and abbots, especially when elections were contested.”¹²

Henry agreed to renounce the traditional investiture with ring and staff. Doing this, he gave up the shadow but retained the substance. The king still retained the right to have elections carried out in his presence, at which he could exercise his influence. The Pope, however, recognized his right to confer the royal office on the elect with the scepter. Under this agreement,

the people would choose their king, however the Pope had to confirm the selection.

The Concordat was the not the “end all” answer, but it did bring an end to the fifty -plus years of struggle and debate which had raged through the Christian society. This time of peace would not last forever. It wouldn’t bring lasting peace because there was no real ground for compromise. Before the struggle began, the Pope was the Emperor’s chief bishop. The Gregorian ideas had the emperor as a papal nominee, essentially doing what the Pope desired. Both ideals could not stand. It would have to be either the emperor or the pope who would have ultimate control over the people. The peace would not last, as the friction between pope and emperor would arise again.

IV. Conclusion

The idea of separation of church and state finds its beginnings with the struggle between Henry IV and Gregory VII. In our country, we live under the ideal of total separation of Church from State. In the history of the Christian church in America, this seems to be the goal. Yet, interestingly, Frank Roberts comments: “We, contemporary Westerners, live in a time when a complete separation is often presented as the ideal resolution. But we know that such a separation is never truly complete or really ideal. The church may not remain aloof from ‘secular affairs’ and the state cannot ignore ‘religious activities.’ These are not isolated spheres of human activity, hermetically sealed from each other. So tension remains and seemingly will remain until Christ, the Lord of both the church and the state, comes again.”¹³ Today, we can be thankful that the Lord has established a form of government under which we are free to worship as we please. The separation of church and state in our country has been a blessing. Will it endure?

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Endnotes

- ¹ Johnson, 194.
² Williams, vii.
³ Zachary N. Brooke, *Lay Investiture and Its Relation to the Conflicts of Empire and Papacy*, 34.
⁴ Latourette, 471.
⁵ Latourette, 471.
⁶ Johnson, 193.
⁷ Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Investiture Contest and the German Constitution*, 63.
⁸ Johnson, 193.
⁹ Latourette, 472.
¹⁰ Roberts, 88.
¹¹ Latourette, 473.
¹² Brooke, 33.
¹³ Roberts, 89.
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A Brief Exegetical Study of 2 Thessalonians 3:6ff.

Paul F. Larsen

Introduction

The background for this portion of 2 Thessalonians is important if one is to understand the Apostle's concern for the congregation at Thessalonica. The beginnings of the congregation are recorded in Acts 17:1-10. While many Jews and Gentiles embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ which Paul was preaching, there were others who created such difficulty for Paul (together with Silas and Timothy) that he was compelled to leave the city and continue on to the south to Berea. Some of the unbelieving Jews followed him, causing other faithful believers to take him to Athens; there he waited for Silas and Timothy to join him.

Being unable to return to Thessalonica himself and visit the congregation, Paul sent Timothy to strengthen them with the gospel. Timothy returned to Paul who had in the meantime gone on to Corinth. The report was favorable; the Thessalonians had remained faithful during a time of persecution and were examples of faith and love. Paul was moved then to write the first epistle to the Thessalonians (about the close of the year 52, or early in 53). Included in the first epistle were comments by Paul related to the second advent of Jesus (4:15ff.). However, there were some who misunderstood and became convinced that this second coming was imminent and that the Lord would now relieve their persecutions. In his book, *Introduction to the Books of the Bible*, Christopher Drewes writes (181ff.):

Mistaken and enthusiastic men had also nourished this deception by appealing to visions and to the traditionary sayings of the apostle; and it would even appear that an epistle had been forged in the name of the apostle. The church was thrown into a state of wild excitement; an impatient and fanatical longing for the instant when Christ would come seized upon one portion . . . The consequence was that many of the Thessalonians were neglecting their secular business and living idle and useless lives, conceiving that there was no use of working in a world which was so soon to be destroyed (Chap.2:2-3; 3:11-12). Hearing of this state of affairs in the Thessalonian church, the apostle dispatched his Second Epistle. . . . His main object was to correct the erroneous notions concerning the imminent advent of Christ.

After greeting them in the opening words of the second epistle, and giving thanks to God for their growth in faith amidst all the persecutions they have had to endure, he encourages them to deny the temptation to think of the Day of the Lord as coming immediately. He tells them that this Day will not come until after the "man of sin" is revealed, the "lawless" one who is the great Antichrist. Paul then admonishes them in the third chapter to depend on the Lord for all things, and to cease the disorderly manner of life some of them have adopted.

We begin our discussion with the fifth verse of chapter 3:

(v. 5) Ὁ δὲ κύριος κατευθύναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ εἰς τὴν ὑπομονὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Translation: *Also, may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.*

κατευθύναι Aor. inf.; make straight, direct, guide aright.

ἀγάπην Acc.; love with highest concern and purpose.

ὑπομονὴν Patience. (Note: with "of God" and "of Christ" these are subjective genitives)

Paul wants to give greater assurance to the Thessalonians so that what he is about to ask of them will be received and accepted as faithful believers in Christ. The words he wrote to them did not so much point to the *waiting* for Christ to come, as it pointed to the example of the kind of

patience exhibited by Christ as He dealt with sinners of all sorts. The genitives in his caution to them are subjective genitives. This patience on the part of Christ was one manner in which the love of God could be shown to mankind as the work of redemption was being accomplished. Paul wanted this kind of patience to be in the hearts and minds of the Thessalonians as they dealt with those who were misunderstanding the second coming of Jesus. We think of the times Jesus spoke to His disciples as having “little faith.” The Lord mentioned to some that He was amazed that they could not grasp His mission even after He had been with them for a long time. Jesus groaned at the tomb of Lazarus—not in grief or sorrow for His friend—but at the difficulty of those present who did not see Him as Redeemer. And above all, He showed patience with Peter when the apostle could not understand the need for Jesus to die.

(v. 6) Παραγγέλλομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐν νόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ἣν παρελάβετε παρ’ ἡμῶν.

Translation: *Now we command you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking around disorderly, not according to the tradition which you received from us.*

στέλλεσθαι Pres. inf. mid.; to contract (shrink) one' s self; shun, withdraw from
ἀτάκτως Adv.; (Military term) soldiers not lined up, irregular in conduct, disorderly.

παράδοσιν Acc. sing.; that which is transmitted in the way of teaching (whether it be doctrine, tradition, custom, precept, etc.)

παρελάβετε 2 pl. aor. ind. act.; “you” received, not “he” or “they”

When Paul says “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” it is in connection with the whole teaching of Jesus, in connection with all He revealed concerning God' s dealing with us for our salvation. What Paul is asking the congregation to do, namely to discipline those who are disturbing them, is to be done according to the Lord' s will and purpose. Their actions are not to be determined by their own opinions, but “in the name of the Lord,” as He might guide them. The action of withdrawing is not one of finality, but of discipline which brings a good result. The word “withdraw” is not a synonym for the word “avoid” in Romans 16:17. Here it is the thought of shunning, or shrinking back from something. This has a two-fold purpose. First, to let the offender know with certainty that his actions are unacceptable, and second, to prevent the congregation from becoming a partaker of his sins in even the smallest way.

The Thessalonians have earlier been informed they ought to deal with the disorderly persons (cf. 1 Thess. 5; esp. 5:14). R. Lenski makes an interesting point in connection with the action of withdrawing from disorderly brothers. He reminds us that Paul continues to use the word “brother” with those who err in this case, and also says that the problem is almost self -solving in that sooner or later hunger itself would cause those who had quit their work to get busy and relieve their hunger as soon as their money ran out. Thus the situation was by its nature a short-term problem. If some were brought to their senses in due time, and realized how they had fallen into sin, and then repented of that sin, they would of course be received back into the good graces of the congregation.

Nothing is said in this letter to the Thessalonians that requires the final action of excommunication, but all encouragement is given to have patience and hope that the offenders will return to good behavior. The disorderliness of the offenders is likened to the poorly trained military personnel who cannot function well. They need to be further trained before they can be effectual. It is similar to our own cliché when we say that someone is “out of line.”

The action can also be quite similar to interrupting attendance at the Lord' s Supper for someone who needs to reflect on what his offence might be. There may well be those who feel that if a member of the congregation is asked to refrain from taking the Lord' s Supper (for very

valid reasons) that this is nothing less than an act of excommunication. However, it ought to be that such action would first of all prevent offence and allow for needed instruction and lead to repentance.

With the use of the word “tradition” Paul is not leaving the import of the teachings of Christ. “Tradition” is not merely what we have been accustomed to do or use, but is the very essence of what is followed by the apostles as taught by the Lord. The word points to the transmission of the gospel truths which have been set forth for all the Thessalonians to accept and follow.

(v. 7) αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε πῶς δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς ὅτι οὐκ ἡτακτήσαμεν ἐν ὑμῖν,

Translation: *For you know yourselves how you ought to be imitating us, because we were not disorderly among you,*

μιμεῖσθαι Pres. inf.; copy, imitate, follow an example

Paul is not taking the congregation to task here with these words, but reminding them how they had responded to the example set by Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Their response had been good; it was the disorderly members who had failed to imitate as they ought. With the Greek δεῖ Paul is simply expressing how necessary it is for all of them, Paul and his company included, to accept a moral necessity in obeying the teaching. To disregard is to be disorderly.

(v.8) οὐδὲ δωρεὰν ἄρτον ἐφάγομεν παρά τινος, ἀλλ' ἐν κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαί τινα ὑμῶν:

Translation: *neither did we eat bread from anyone gratuitously, but in labor and difficulty working, night and day so as not to be a burden to any one of you,*

δωρεὰν Adv. acc.; as a gift, gratis

The consistency of teaching and action are apparent in the lives of Paul and the others. They practiced what they preached. Here is where the disorderly Thessalonians exposed their false thinking, for they abandoned the labor required to support themselves and sought to eat from the labors of others without cost; they had stopped work altogether as though warranted by their expectation that the Day of the Lord was imminent. But Paul and his helpers had not acted in a similar manner. The purpose of Paul's teaching had been that they might learn to know what the Day of the Lord was, and that they should be strengthened in their faith in that regard. To set a good example for this, Paul and the others had worked very hard and with difficulty, for theirs had been the responsibility to teach the congregation even while they earned their own bread and butter.

(v.9) οὐχ ὅτι οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ' ἵνα ἑαυτοὺς τύπον δώμεν ὑμῖν εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς.

Translation: *not that we do not have a right, but in order that we give ourselves as an example for you to imitate us.*

ἐξουσίαν Acc. sing. of ἐξουσία (from ἐξέσσι); power, authority, ability, license, right.

Paul and his helpers did have the right to expect full support from the Thessalonians, but did not exercise this right. Jesus Himself provided for that right when He commissioned His 70 disciples to preach and teach, receiving their support from the inhabitants of every city to which they went (cf. Luke 10). But Paul realized that to insist on his right at every opportunity would hinder the effect of the gospel at times, and here in Thessalonica it was a good example to lay aside his right in order to impress upon the disorderly the need for working to support oneself. (In the context of this epistle the word 'authority' seems to be too legal).

“Imitate” is repeated with the same sense as in verse 7.

(v. 10) καὶ γὰρ ὅτε ἦμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, τοῦτο παρηγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι

μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω.

Translation: *For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone does not want to work, neither shall he eat.*

ἐσθιέτω 3 sing. pres. imper.; to eat, to drink

These few words sum up the whole of the problem existing for the Thessalonians. The expectation of the Lord' s return almost seems to be a built-in excuse for the disorderly ones to refuse to work, and at the same time to salve their consciences. This conclusion is justified by the fact that even after the disorderly members had been instructed for some time (ever since the first epistle was received) they had not responded by taking up gainful occupation. It really is a matter of "wanting to do what is right" rather than "must do what is right." The Word of God teaches that we ought to respond to the needs of others as well as to our own needs, and the gospel is the best motivation for all men to pursue that. Love is at stake.

Always we remember that there are those who would gladly work to earn their own bread, and cannot. The elderly, the young, the sick, etc., are not able to be gainfully employed for the most part. These are not the subject of Paul' s concern here. The crux of the matter is how the disorderly are using the doctrine of the Day of the Lord as an excuse for "free-loading." They seem to have forgotten the Word: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19).

(v. 11) ἀκούομεν γάρ τινες περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως, μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους:

Translation: *For we hear some are walking about among you disorderly, in no way working but going about as busybodies.*

περιεργαζομένους Acc. pl . masc. pres. ptcpl.; to do something with excessive or superfluous care. To be officious, a busybody.

Even after responding to the situation in the first epistle, the apostle reports that they are hearing that the problem is continuing. Not all the members were involved; only some were. The situation was putting a strain on their relationship with each other, as to whether they could indeed call one another "brother." The guilty ones were not engaged in anything worthwhile, but were making a nuisance of themselves by being involved in everybody else' s business and in nothing to do with their own business. Hence the term "busybody." Much of their defense lay in the false claim that a letter had been received from the Apostle Paul which opened the door for this sinful behavior (cf. chap. 2:2). This was the sum and substance of their disorderliness.

(v. 12) τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις παραγγέλλομεν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ ἵνα μετὰ ἡσυχίας ἐργαζόμενοι τὸν ἑαυτῶν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν.

Translation: *Now to those who are such we command and implore in the Lord Jesus Christ that working (being occupied) with quietness they eat their own bread.*

παρακαλοῦμεν 1 pl. pres. ind.; act call upon, invite, exhort, admonish, (implore).
ἐργαζόμενοι nom. sing. pres. ptcpl.; work, labor, be occupied, be active

Two verbs are expressed here in order to emphasize the seriousness of what the congregation is facing. "We command" is stated again here as earlier in verses 6 and 10. In each instance it is implied that it is the Lord' s will that is to be heeded; the words "in His name" need not be repeated since the thought is there. The disorderly ones were not working, they were not quiet but agitating others, and they were not eating their own food but begging of those who were still working at occupations. The emphasis is in this verse placed upon the need for quietness. Those who are not satisfied, do not have their "feet on the ground," and are unsure of both themselves and their future are often unstable and noisy in their relationships with others.

The other verb, “we implore” is expressed as a direct invitation for the others to stand and listen carefully. Other translations use the word “admonish,” or “exhort,” but the idea of calling out to get their attention is found in the makeup of this compound verb. To “implore” also gives one the sense that the bond of brotherhood is not yet broken, even though it may be strained.

(v.13) Ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες.

Translation: *But you, brothers, do not be (faint-hearted)/(discouraged) doing good.*

ἐγκακήσητε 2 pl. aor. subj.; to be despondent, remiss, faint-hearted, weary.

Paul here encourages the faithful members to continue in their efforts to do the good thing they have been doing in obedience to his earlier exhortation to them in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. This encouragement is not simply a general urging to be doing good in all charity, as Christians are always to be doing. But this is a very concrete exhortation in line with what has been a problem among them. The “good” is to be the conduct of the faithful which is so different and contrary to that of those who were disorderly.

(v. 14) εἰ δέ τις οὐχ ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, τοῦτον σημειώσθε, μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐντραπή:

Translation: *Indeed, if anyone does not obey our word through this epistle, identify this man for yourselves, do not associate with him, in order that he be put to shame.*

σημειώσθε 2 pl. pres. imper. mid.; mark, inscribe marks upon, note for one's self

συναναμίγνυσθαι (cf note on p.819 in Nestle - Marshall) Pres. inf. mid. to associate with, be familiar with, mix.

ἐντραπή 3 sing. aor. subj.; - passive from to turn someone back upon himself, to be put to shame.

Here, finally, is the action Paul is laying out for the congregation to take in order to bring the disorderly members back into line. The discipline is severe; it is a good example of what “tough love” means. There is to be no holding back or any hesitation on the part of those who are identifying for themselves, publicly and openly, just who they are that need to be disciplined. When the activity of spiritual fellowship has to be curtailed to any degree, it is a warning action that ought to be heeded. The purpose for this disciplinary refusal to associate is clearly stated: in order that the offending ones are put to shame. It is a call to repentance, as is the purpose of any action of church discipline. At this juncture the apostle has not mentioned, or threatened, the action of final termination of fellowship. He is addressing the problem of dealing with brothers in the faith who need to realize they are on the brink of being expelled from the congregation, but this final action is not yet a part of Paul's counsel. The patience of Christ is still very much a factor in dealing with these weak brothers.

(v. 15) καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἡγείσθε, ἀλλὰ νοθετεύετε ὡς ἀδελφόν.

Translation: *And do not look upon him as an enemy, but reprove him as a brother.*

ἡγείσθε 2 pl. pres. imper.; Amdt-Gingrich reports that with the acc. the word means to look upon, consider, think.

νοθετεύετε 2 pl. pres. imper.; admonish, warn, put in mind of, (reprove).

Verse 15 is an added thought to what has just been given. R. Lenski makes the note that the καὶ is not adversative. The approach by the congregation at this time is to be consistent with the directives given in Galatians 6:1 which states:

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (NKJV).

This kind of response by the congregation is a patient response of love with the goal of restoring the weak brothers through repentance back into the full exercise of fellowship. It is

obvious, of course, that any refusal to repent will only harden the situation to the point where it will be necessary to declare a full and complete separation such as is noted in Romans 16:17-18. Until that becomes necessary, the Thessalonians are to consider the disorderly ones as “but of line,” and “disorderly” as noted in verse six.

(vv. 16-18) Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δώη ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ
ρόπῳ. ὁ κύριος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου, ὃ ἐστὶν σημεῖον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ: οὕτως γράφω.
ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

Translation: (16) *Indeed, may the Lord of peace Himself give this peace to you always and in every way. The Lord be with you all. (17) The salutation of Paul in my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; thus I write. (18) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*

Paul closes the epistle with the prayer that the Lord would give the Thessalonians that peace which the Lord Himself won and secured for all men through the forgiveness of sins; through the redemption on the cross. Peace between man and God is a gift most precious, and any true fellowship between the saints should be reflected as fully as possible without any the need for any reservation due to sinful weakness.

The added note for the Thessalonians to recognize Paul' s signature is to assure them that the epistle is genuine and not a forgery as mentioned in 2:2. His closing word is the prayer that the love of Jesus, undeserved as it is, would be in their possession.

BOOK REVIEW AND EXCERPT

Egbert Schaller: *Selected Sermons of E. Schaller*, Volume II: The Trinity Season, available from Paul R. Koch, 3425 Morgan Ave., Eau Claire, WI 54701-7023. If no postage is needed, \$5.00 per copy. One copy postpaid: \$6.00. Two through five copies: \$5.50 each, postpaid. Six or more copies, \$5.00 each, postpaid. These prices also apply to Volume I (sermons from the festival half of the Church Year). When ordering, please specify Volume I or Volume II. For more information, contact Paul Koch at the above address or by e-mail, at parekoak@aol.com.

The Journal of Theology of June 2001 printed a review of Volume I of *Selected Sermons*, with its sermons mainly from the forties. Volume II has a few sermons from the forties, including two sermons for the Reformation festival and a memorable sermon for V-J Day on August 15, 1945, at the close of World War II. Most of the sermons, however, are from the fifties, that decade when the controversies in the Synodical Conference were heating up with the end result, in 1960, of the formation of a new confessional Lutheran church body, the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

We revere Pastor Schaller as one of the founding fathers of our church body. The messages he brought from the Word of God during the ten years preceding 1960 will help us all understand his motivation for taking the stand he took in 1959, when he severed fellowship with the church body in which he had served all his life, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

(WELS). The Foreword to Volume II as well as the Biographical Sketch of Egbert Schaller at the close of Volume II explain the historical setting of the times when these sermons were prepared and delivered. The last sermon in Volume II is a sermon addressed to a congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession on its tenth anniversary in 1968.

In the fifties one of the areas of controversy in the Synodical Conference was the question of whether membership in the various lodges or in the Scouts was compatible with membership in a Christian congregation. The voice of the Synodical Conference was no longer unanimous on this question. The many references in these sermons to the lodge and Scouting reveal that to the author of these sermons there can be no compromise between the Christian religion of grace and the work-righteous religion of the lodge. For example, in a 1956 sermon on John 12:9-11 (pp. 5-8) Pastor Schaller declares: "One is greatly troubled these days by the signs that indicate that Christian people are so little troubled by the decay within the Christian church. . . . When they see how many congregations are flourishing outwardly—although the preaching in their pulpits has become a religion just like that of the chief priests—they refuse to face the evidence. And when they are told that this anti-gospel spirit is conquering large areas of the Lutheran church—as is evidenced by the presence of lodge and the Scout religion—they wish to ignore it."

In a sermon on Matthew 5: 20-26 (pp. 23-27) Pastor Schaller explains that "the righteousness promoted by the Scouts, for example, or the Masonic lodge" is "the best the world has to offer today," just as the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus' day was the best that man could come up with then. But Jesus says to us: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The only answer is that "in Jesus Christ we are and have a better righteousness—through faith and trust in what He did for us." At the same time this imputed righteousness of Christ dare not be used as an excuse by us to be satisfied with less-than-the-best morality in our own lives. "It is no longer impossible for us in our own living to have a better righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and is ready to teach us the true understanding of God's Law. He is ready to give us the power to live like that. All that we have heard of our relationship to our brethren is not an ideal that lies beyond our reach, but a duty toward which we can and must strive."

Several of the sermons included in Volume II make reference to synodical conventions that were about to take place. In a 1955 sermon on Jeremiah 28:12-17 (pp. 34-38) Schaller's congregation was reminded: "In less than two weeks our synod will be meeting in convention at Saginaw, Michigan." (This is the convention that postponed the avoiding of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod as an erroristic church body even though the convention did unanimously declare the LC-MS to be guilty of causing divisions and offenses contrary to the true doctrine by its practices and policies). Schaller went on to say: "The Word of God . . . will tell them that the Truth of God's Word demands of them that they reject error and errorists, and that they must find ways of separating from those in our own midst who persist in teaching and practicing contrary to God's Word." "Let us, then, pray earnestly for our Church, for the delegates that represent us at the convention."

Our editor has suggested that we print here an entire sermon from Volume II. I have chosen a 1956 sermon on Luke 19: 41-44 (pp. 41-45) that was preached shortly before the special Wisconsin Synod convention of that summer. I think this sermon may very well induce us to purchase Volume II as well as Volume I and to thank Paul and Anne Koch and Jonathan Schaller for preparing these sermons for publication at this time.

(pp. 41-45)

Sermon Text: Luke 19: 41-44

Tenth Sunday of Trinity, Aug. 5, 1956

This text comes to us as a part of the ancient church gospel for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, on this Sunday after the close of the convention of our Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Synod. When a district takes action in matters of synod, that action is purely advisory; final decisions are made by the convention of synod itself. The synod meets again in this month at Watertown, Wisconsin, to consider and pass upon some of the most important matters that can confront a true Church of Christ. All of us need earnestly to labor and pray that the Holy Ghost, and not men, may direct us.

Our deep concern about this is strengthened by the fact that the Lord has timed events so that this gospel will be read in the churches today. It is a sad report. Does it have a message for us in the situation in which our synod finds itself? God's Word is always timely; in this case it is easily recognized that the lesson of our gospel cries out to be spoken to us and our synod. Men did not understand it in the day when it was first uttered, and that seems strange to us now when we look back. But will it be understood and applied today? That is a question our synod will have to answer, and our congregation will have to answer it for itself. Turning, then, to the divine report, we consider –

Why Jesus weeps over Jerusalem: He does so

I. When the church fails its opportunity; and

II. When it does so in its day.

I. *“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”* Although these words are very simple, it is necessary for our understanding that we explain carefully who it is that Jesus is addressing. His tears are flowing over Jerusalem. But here we must not think of a city in the sense of Minneapolis or St. Paul, a political and social unit. Jerusalem was that, of course, also—but not in the thinking of the Savior, because this was the place to which all believers assembled to worship, because here the Word of God had its home, so to speak, because here God and His grace dwelt and waited to be received. Jerusalem stood as the true visible Church of God. That is what it should have been; that it was to represent; that was the reason for its existence.

But Jesus wept bitter tears because the city and the people as a whole who belonged to its Temple had failed its opportunity. What was that opportunity? So often nowadays, when we hear about “the Church's opportunity,” we expect to hear a sermon on missions, for we think of the Church's opportunity as that of rendering service to the Lord. But we forget that is not the first or the most important opportunity for the Church or for the individual; before the Church can serve, it must receive. Before it can bring life and happiness to others, it must accept life and happiness for itself. Before it can speak the Truth to others, it must accept the Truth for itself and preserve it for itself.

Our Lord wept because Jerusalem had failed the opportunity to do that. If only it had known the things which belonged to its peace! The opposite of peace is war and destruction; and as our text shows, that was the lot Jerusalem had chosen for itself. It would be destroyed, not merely as a city (for that can be and has been rebuilt) but as a church where God's honor dwells, that lives as God designed it—a light to the world, a city set on a hill.

But why was Jerusalem lost? It was indeed still standing as a city when the Savior spoke, but it had proved that it did not know the things which belonged to its peace. None of us is in any doubt as to what those things were. Certainly first of all it was Jesus Himself whom they did not know. If you had asked the people of Jerusalem, “Do you know Jesus of Nazareth?” they would of course have shouted, “Indeed we do!” for they had seen and heard and watched Him work miracles.

But that is not knowing Jesus, for they did not recognize Him as their Redeemer from sin, the Lamb to be sacrificed by God, the fulfillment of all the promises. They did not see their eternal salvation in Him. This belongs to your peace, my peace, the peace of every soul. But

Jesus does not speak only of Himself, of His person. He says, "*If ye had known the things. . .*" Knowing Jesus is possible only for those who accept and follow faithfully His Word. With knowing Jesus goes a way of life. Certain things are true because Christ redeemed us; these things must be upheld. If these are rejected, Jesus is rejected, and peace is lost. Not political peace, but peace with God, the peace that prevails where God dwells with His grace.

"If thou hadst known—" Why did Jerusalem not know? Surely this question wants to be answered. How could it fail its opportunity? For that is what it was, without question. Jerusalem did not have to go out and seek peace, for peace came to it. God calls it "the time of visitation"; and what a blessed visit that was! From the time that the Wise Men came to Jerusalem and forced men to dig out and study the ancient prophecy concerning Him who was to be born in Bethlehem to the day when the Prince of Peace rode in for the last time to reveal the very heart of a gracious God and establish a rule of forgiveness of all sins, Jerusalem had been filled with the Truth as it is in Christ. No Church has ever been granted greater opportunity to know the things that belong to its peace— but they "*would not.*"

And why not? They could not see them; they were hidden from their eyes. What was it that could hide Jesus and His Word? Dear friends, how necessary it is that we understand well the answer. The things that belong to the Church's peace are not always what the members of the church want to have; they have other ambitions. The people of Jerusalem were filled with many false hopes and dreams and ambitions. They had their hearts set on earthly splendor and glory for themselves and for their city. This spirit was at first apparent even in the Lord's disciples. The mother of two of them did not hesitate to ask for her sons the honor of sitting at the right and left of Jesus' throne when He established Himself as King of Jerusalem and the world. And because this was the way Jerusalem saw its salvation and happiness, how could they see the spiritual glory that lay in the humble Jesus or the directives of His doctrine?

Therefore the people also failed to oppose and repudiate the false teachers of Jerusalem, the scribes and the Pharisees, who in doctrine and practice persisted in disobedience to the Word of prophecy as well as to the blessed Word of fulfillment spoken by the Son of God. When it came to a showdown, they would not reject error but shared it and finally joined in shouting, "Crucify Him!"

Someone once asked, "What do you do when you can't do anything?" Jesus showed the answer; He prayed and He wept. But the blest Church called "Jerusalem" could not and did not survive.

II. The reason our synod has a right to exist before God lies in its opportunity to be and remain another Jerusalem, a true Church of God. If Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because that church failed its opportunity, He emphasizes that His sorrow is greatest because Jerusalem failed "*in its day.*" That is an expression for us to focus on now if we are to benefit by the report of our text.

Our church body has its day too, a day to attain its peace and preserve it. What does God offer us for our peace? Surely the things which belong to peace are always the same. They are Christ Jesus the Redeemer of our souls, our righteousness and our only hope of heaven, together with His sanctifying Truth—all of it. When a church has these, it stands like an island in the midst of an ocean of unbelief, ungodliness, and human religions. The things that belong to peace are the same in every generation and for the Church of all ages. But the conditions are always somewhat different; our day of opportunity has a different character than did the day of Jerusalem, when the Savior walked its streets.

But there can be no doubt at all that this is a time when we may fully know what belongs to our peace. While many other visible churches no longer enjoy a clear vision of these things, God in His grace has planted in our midst the tokens of all that makes for peace: the doctrine of Jesus Christ in its truth and purity and the practice which such doctrine indicates. It is for us to know these things; it is also true that we can know them and have no excuse for not knowing

them. We know what is of the world, and what is of God. We know what keeps the Church pure, and what makes it unclean. We know what contributes toward salvation, and what contributes toward loss of the Truth. We have examined Lodges and Scouting and Chaplaincy and Unionism and found them contrary to the Word of God and therefore contrary to Christ and His redemption. These are the scribes and Pharisees of our day, concerning whom Jesus said to His disciples, "But after their works do ye not."

This belongs to our peace. But alas! in this our day we are in danger of meeting the conditions that prevail, as Jerusalem did, filled with some false dreams and hopes. If it seems to anyone more important to preserve a certain visible church body such as the Synodical Conference at all costs rather than to preserve the Truth and to avoid those who insist upon violating it, then we have not known the things that belong to our peace.

We live in the present, not in the future. It is well that Jesus calls this our DAY. What God will bring to pass tomorrow is in His hands. We shall pray with all our hearts for what we hope also for the Synodical Conference. But in this our day we must *"know the things that belong to our peace"*; and that is not outward peace, for such is not the condition, much as we would like it to be. This is, first of all, the day of this congregation. In our hearts we must preserve inviolate the glory that God has planted there with the possession of His Truth.

May the Savior not have to weep over us in this our day. As in the case of Jerusalem, it is always easier to go the way of least resistance; it is comfortable and pleasant to our flesh. But the day of the visitation of grace is better than the day of the visitation of wrath. May God grant our church the vision to see that, and mercifully preserve us from the loss of the Truth! Amen!

Hymn selections: 28, 419, 461

David Lau