

PTB2-16c: The Great Maker of History Makes History In Selecting His Own Jewels.

Last words of the Old Testament: Malachi 3:14-18

14

Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

15

And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

16

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

17

And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18

Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

4-5: Ezekiel 1-30, the Impending Peril of the Captivity of Judah.

God's people of Judah, knowing they were more righteous than the northern kingdom of Israel that had gone into captivity, considered themselves like the US does today as the unique recipients of divine providence. They would not face up to the prospect of Captivity in Babylon as Ezekiel warned them in 1-30.

1. The historical circumstances of Ezekiel.

The Prophet Ezekiel was first a priest; but five years after he was carried captive with King Jehoiachin and others to Babylon in 598 B.C., he was called to do the work of a Prophet with a message for the Jewish captives by the river Chebar in lower Babylon. Twenty-five when taken from home, Ezekiel was thirty when with a vision of the glory of God, he came to recognize God as universal, controlling all person and nations of the world. Like Isaiah he was first a priest, like Daniel he was taken captive to Babylon, and like Jeremiah was a Prophet also concerned with a Captivity message. Ezekiel and his wife with 10,000 other carefully chosen captives were

marched to Babylon according to II Kings 24:14. The priests and craftsman, accustomed to respectable and status in Jerusalem, were despised in Babylon, treated like slaves and thieves; and the captors taunted them about their God "Yahweh", harassing that He was inferior to their own gods.

2. The message of judgment on Judah already happened to the rebellious people of God in captivity, Ezekiel 1-24. Far from being surprised that there were only 16 Writing Prophets of the captivities and restoration, we should be surprised that there were that many in light of The Message that God's people had to receive from all the called of God Prophets that "God's people were not acting like God's people". While in Jerusalem they had refused to listen to Jeremiah, and now in Babylon they were still rebellious. Of course in the whole captivity period, Assyrian and Chaldean, there were many more false prophets and priests, often preaching peace when there would be no peace for the nation for years to come.

(1). Behind the vision of God was the call of Ezekiel to be a Prophet to a rebellious people that might not listen to him, Ezekiel 2. **{This is extra-informative in that it is a detailed example of the Spirit of God and the voice of God moving a Prophet to receive revelations of the Word of God. So unique is the revelations of Scriptures through men called Prophets that it only happened approximately 20 times in the OT, setting this far apart from the contemporary teachers of itching ears who would claim extra-biblical revelations with the magic words "God told me".}**

"So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking. And He said to me, 'Son of man {a favorite word for Ezekiel, repeated often in the book to signify his identification with God's people}, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.' Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet {evidently Ezekiel still could not stand up, so God stood him up as He spoke}; and I heard Him who spoke to me. And He said to me: 'Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel {although it is primarily Judah in captivity, God still calls them the children of Israel}, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day {God's people not acting like God's people was still going on in captivity}. For they are impudent and stubborn children. {Can we say that likewise of God's people today and in America as they begin to pass through the historical event of the Falling Away?} I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God'. {Always a telltale revelation through a Prophet or Apostle, that he has been enlisted by God Himself to deliver the very words of God and from God.} As for them {you see, it really doesn't matter that much about them as far as the deliverance of the message}, whether they hear or whether they refuse--for they are a rebellious house--yet they will know that a prophet has been among them. {What was important for them to

know that a Prophet of God was among them, which within itself showed that God still cared.) (Ezekiel 2:1-5)

(2). Jeremiah in Jerusalem and Ezekiel in Babylon warned of the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which happened in 587 B.C., which did happen 11 years after Ezekiel arrived in Babylon and six years after He prophesied it, Ezekiel 4:1-5:17.

Even now the false prophets spoke of a speedy return home; yet Ezekiel spoke of a total collapse of the kingdom of Judah still to come and a total destruction of Jerusalem; it was a message of warning and threat which we might say is the equivalent of The Message of God's people are not acting like God's people so that they are going to pay for it, the extent of the penalty and the time of the penalty having been determined by God. {Later will be Daniel that gives us most of the time details of what will happen to the people of God.}

"And I will do among you {the details are of the destruction of Jerusalem in the context} what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations." (Ezekiel 5:9)

(3). God through Ezekiel condemns the idolatry and sins of Jerusalem, 6:1-7:27.

"Thus says the Lord God: 'A disaster, a singular disaster; behold, it has come! An end has come, the end has come; it has dawned for you; behold, it has come! Doom has come to you, you who sell in the land; the time has come, a day of trouble is near, and not of rejoicing in the mountains. Now upon you I will soon pour out My fury, and spend My anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will repay you for all your abominations.'" (Ezekiel 7:5-8)

(4). Why glory departed from the city of Jerusalem, 8:1-11:25.

"And you shall know that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you." (Ezekiel 11:12) (5). God will preserve in captivity a remnant, 6:8.

"Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries." (Ezekiel 6:8)

(6). False prophets and prophetess will be swept away by storm, Ezekiel 13.

4-6: The Mighty Prayer of Daniel that sent Gabriel.

The Prayer of Daniel in Daniel 9 for his own people, confessing the past sins of his people is a summary also of the Message of the Writing Prophets.

1. The historical context of Daniel is just that now like in Ezekiel we look at the other side of the coin, from the perspective of the captives in Babylon.

(1). Daniel starts with simple statements of history, but history under the control of God.

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand {this was the doing of God, the Great Maker of History}..." (Daniel 1:1,2a)

(2). Belshazzar took the place of his father as king of Babylon, getting in trouble as he did not honor God as did his father and during a feast for thousands he showed off the golden vessels his father had taken from the temple, consequently seeing the writing on the wall (Daniel 5). Part of the message on the wall when interpreted by Daniel stated that the kingdom would be given to the Medes and Persians (5:28), which of course is more of the control of God of history.

"That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old." (Daniel 5:30,31)

(3). King Darius set up over the kingdom 120 satraps {recall that Syro-Palestine was one satraps with the possible headquarters at Damascus}, over those three governors and Daniel was appointed as one of those governors.

"So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." (Daniel 6:28)

Darius was the Mede and Cyrus the Persian.

(4). During the first year of the reign of Darius, king over the realm of the Chaldeans, Daniel was reading from Jeremiah of how Jerusalem and the captivity would be 70 years long. (Daniel 9:2)

2. On this occasion and in this time in history, the governor Daniel started praying so earnestly that the angel Gabriel was dispatched immediately from heaven to fly swift to answer the fervent prayer of Daniel as to what would be the fate of God's people, Daniel 9.

(1). The end goal of the prayer is given in 16-19 is for mercy and rescue of God's city and God's people.

First it is a prayer for the righteous God to turn His anger and fury away from Jerusalem.

"O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem. Your holy mountains, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us." (Daniel 9:16)

Recall how Paul states in Romans that because of the Jewish religious leaders the name of God is blasphemed among all the nations.

Second it is a prayer that God will again make His face to shine on His sanctuary for His own name's sake. In other words to salvage His own reputation in the world.

"Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate." (Daniel 9:17)

Third based on, not the righteous deeds of the people but rather because of God's "great mercies", Daniel continues to fervently pray that God take a fresh look at the desolations of the city that is called by God's name.

"O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies." (Daniel 9:18)

Fourth, Daniel pleads for God to: (1) forgive, (2) listen, (3) act, and (4) not delay; and all this for the city and the people that are called by His name.

"O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name." (Daniel 9:19)

Daniel did get an answer to his prayer. In fact many answers which told the future history of God's people, of Jerusalem, and of the nation of Israel. God sent Gabriel to lay it out for him and Daniel recorded it in Daniel 9:24-27, starting with the 70 years of captivity foretold by Jeremiah, somewhat veiled in the message from Gabriel as "seventy weeks" (9:24). The bottom line answer went something like this: there would be an on schedule short restoration {**seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**} of God's people to Jerusalem with the rebuilding of the temple long enough for the Messiah to come, but after God's people kill the Messiah there will only be a few years until permanent desolations will come on the city and the temple, indeed on all of those presently called God's people.

(2). In the prayer of Daniel 9:3-19 we see the history of God's people as a wicked and rebellious history.

First, Daniel prayed "to the LORD my God, and made confession (9:3). Notice the God that Daniel addresses: it is the "great and awesome God"; the God Who keeps His covenant and mercy only with those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Second in 9:4,5 Daniel list some of the things "we the people" of God have done throughout our history **departed**: (a) we have sinned and committed iniquity; (b) we have done wickedly and rebelled; (c) we have departed from Your precepts and Your judgments; and (d) we have not heeded the prophets, the servants of God, that spoke in God's name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and to all the people in the land.

Third Daniel contrasts the righteousness which belongs to God to the shame that belongs to the people of God. What is the shame of face to the people of God? Daniel identifies first the people of God as: (a) the men of Judah, (b) to the inhabitants of

Jerusalem, (c) also the inhabitants of all Israel, this would include the northern kingdom, (d) includes those left in the land and those captive in other far away countries where God, the great maker of History, "has driven them".

Fourth Daniel echoes again in 9:7b how God's people did not act like God's people, God driving them out of the land because of "the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You."

Fifth in 9:8 since God's people "have sinned against God", their shame of face has come on their kings, princes, and fathers.

Sixth in 9:9 another contrast between the mercy and forgiveness of God and the rebellion of the people.

Seventh, another way in which God's people did not in their history act like the people of God--they did not obey in 9:10 the voice of God to walk {live} in His laws as given through His servants the Prophets.

Eighth, Daniel recalls the covenant made between God and man under the leadership of Moses and in front of God at Mount Sinai, a covenant that include a promise of blessings in the land if they obeyed and that included a curse with an oath if they did not obey. Daniel acknowledges in his prayer that the people of God, those called by the name of God, did not obey God's voice and transgressed the law.

Ninth in 9:12 Daniel acknowledges in his continued and fervent prayer that God had "confirmed" His words of covenant with curse by bringing a DISASTER upon them. **"And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done in Jerusalem." (Daniel 9:12)**

This made history in disasters far beyond even Katrina. Never has a city been called by God's name and a people called by God's name had God destroy them as did Jerusalem. And in 9:13, Daniel references the record law of Moses {first five books of the Bible} of how this promised disaster would come on the people of God is the covenant with the stipulations of obedience was not obeyed.

Tenth in 9:13, Daniel acknowledges that "we the people" of God still have not made our prayer before our God, a prayer of confession of iniquity and a prayer to understand the truth of God.

God has in 9:14: (a) kept the disaster in mind, and (b) brought the disaster upon us, and (c) all the works like this which God has done are done in righteousness. Daniel of all Prophets, but rather typical of all prophets, saw God as the great maker of history. It was God and God alone who brought the Assyrians and the Babylonians upon God's people because of their sins; and though subsequently He had punished

them through the loss of their kingdoms, the disaster and desolation still remained on Jerusalem and Israel.

4-7: Isaiah 56-66, The Message of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Those three minor Prophets--Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, give the same picture of God's people back in the Promised Land, and religiously complacent as Isaiah 56-66, Isaiah 56-66 by prediction and those minor Prophets by observation. The description of God's people back in and restored in the Promised Land if only until a few years after the cutoff of the Messiah covers the history of 539--as you recall when Cyrus sent the exiles home--until 400, the end of the Bible history in Malachi and the beginning of the intrabiblical period.

1. A short brief on the history of 539-400.

After Cyrus made the formal decree of freedom and backing, Zerubbabel led, according to Ezra in 2:64-65, a group of 50,000 of God's people back to Judah and Jerusalem. Leaving businesses and homes in Babylon, those who could prove their Jewish lineage back to Judah, were encouraged by the hopes of "the promised land" and of how they could purge out those errors in the nation that had led to the Captivity in the first place, but once there the realities were perhaps harsher and dominating over the hopes: those descendants left behind did not welcome them, treating them with hostility and suspicion, work on the Temple was quickly abandoned as survival in the land dominated, and it took 20 more years for Haggai and Zechariah to motivate a continuation on the work. The second temple was completed in 516 B.C. {you recall that the first magnificent Temple was built by Solomon}. When a second wave of returnees came in 75 years with Ezra and Nehemiah, the civil and religious life in Judah was at a low; and with the new leadership, a revival of Jewish identity developed among God's people, which by the way were about to be assimilated by the culture around them. Judah was still a unit of the Persian Empire, called the Fifth Satrapy and the region beyond the Euphrates River. {today would be called **SyroPalestine**}, probably the capital city was Damascus.

2. Haggai with a message to God's people to reconsider priorities.

The Message of the Writing Prophets to God's people changes slightly back in the Glorious Land.

(1). Materialistic pride and greed can not take priority over the seeking first of God's priorities, priorities for the righteousness of God and His kingdom to use the words of Jesus.

"Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough, You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not

warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." (Haggai 1:5,6)

(2). God withholds blessing and fertility from a selfish people who do not glorify Him.

"Therefore because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands." (Haggai 1:10,11)

God through the Prophet Haggai says that He is in control of nature and the disasters of nature, and since God makes that claim we must both believe it and heed it. God controls the dew, the blessings on crops, God controls the droughts, God controls blessings on men and cattle and on the fruit of men's labors when they are His people. And all God wants is the glory and honor that is due to His name.

3. Zechariah with a message to God's people places the emphasis on another complete day of restoration of God's people, on the Day of the LORD. Announcement of the Day of the LORD.

"A day of the LORD is coming..." (Zechariah 14:1)

4. Malachi with The Message to God's people with an emphasis, also needed today, of how behavior is more determined by the surrounding people than by true reverence for God.

"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.