

Background Characters in the Old Testament Lesson 13 4Q 2010

Baruch: Building a Legacy in a Crumbling World

SABBATH

Read memory text – this is a grand old memory verse – how many memorized this one as a child?

Okay – we know what it says, what does it mean?

How do we apply it?

If they speak not according to what scripture teaches then there is no light, no truth in them?

So if someone doesn't accept the seventh day Sabbath, does that mean they have no light in them?

If someone doesn't accept the state of the dead does that mean they have no light in them?

Do we make this text absolutist or do we see people on growth curves and realize it depends on which way they are going?

Does someone have to speak according to Scripture, in that they must get the interpretation of Scripture correct on all doctrines, or must a person have a love for Scripture a willingness to be led out of darkness to the truth?

Examples from history – what about Martin Luther – did he understand the Sabbath?

Foremost among those who were called to lead the church from the darkness of popery into the light of a purer faith, stood Martin Luther. Zealous, ardent, and devoted, knowing no fear but the fear of God, and acknowledging no foundation for religious faith but the Holy Scriptures, Luther was the man for his time; through him God accomplished a great work for

the reformation of the church and the enlightenment of the world. {GC 120.1}

Notice “a man for his time” what does this mean? Truth is unfolding, Martin Luther didn’t understand all truth, but wanted to follow the truth where it led.

What about today? Is there any person on earth who understands the Scripture completely accurately in all details? Then is there anyone who speaks correctly on all details? Then what does the text mean?

Could it mean that if they oppose the truths that have been revealed, if they reject new light, if they are unwilling to keep the mind open for new revelation then they will lose their understanding of what they previously had?

We shall **not** be accepted and honored of God in doing the same work that our fathers did. **We do not** occupy the position which they occupied in the unfolding of truth. In order to be accepted and honored as they were, **we must improve the light which shines upon us**, as they improved that which shone upon them; we must do as they would have done, had they lived in our day. Luther and the Wesleys were reformers in their time. **It is our duty to continue the work of reform. If we neglect to heed the light, it will become darkness**; and the degree of darkness will be proportionate to the light rejected. {Spirit of Prophecy vol 4. p 186.2}

Thoughts?

The same law obtains in the spiritual as in the natural world. **He who abides in darkness will at last lose the power of vision.** He is shut in by a deeper than midnight blackness; and to him the brightest noontide can bring no light. He "walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." 1 John 2:11. Through persistently cherishing evil, willfully disregarding the pleadings of divine love, **the sinner loses the**

love for good, the desire for God, the very capacity to receive the light of heaven. The invitation of mercy is still full of love, the light is shining as brightly as when it first dawned upon his soul; but the voice falls on deaf ears, the light on blinded eyes. {MB 92.3}

No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "**Man turns from God, not God from him.**" Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. **The responsibility rests with the sinner.** By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, **until at last the light will fail to impress**, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even "the light that is in thee" has become darkness. **The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul. {MB 93.1}**

What do you hear in this passage? What kind of God do we serve? Why will individuals be lost? What does sin do to the sinner? And what happens to the truth we possess if we reject further truth?

So when we hear our memory verse quoted and it is used to hold us to the light of past ages, rather than advance in the light, what should we think?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Baruch's world..." thoughts?

What do you think about strong nationalistic undercurrents? Should we have strong ties to our countries? Should we be patriots to an earthly king or kingdom?

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1John 2:15

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for **they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.** ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ **They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.** ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ **As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.** ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. John 17:14-19

Was Jesus loyal to a nation? Was Jesus a nationalist? Are we to be His representatives in the world? Are we to be nationalists? Or are we to love all humanity regardless of nationality?

Where is our citizenship? Is it not in heaven? Are we not citizens of God's heavenly kingdom? Do we live that way?

Yesterday someone emailed me the link to a Newsweek article entitled, *One Nation Under God*. It is about the agenda of the Christian right in America – listen to this excerpt:

Gay marriage and abortion used to predictably drive religious-right voters to the polls. As recently as 2004, when evangelicals were credited with the reelection of George W. Bush, sex and sexual mores defined the sides in the culture wars. But no longer. As the economy has become the political priority for liberals and conservatives alike, the traditional family-values issues have been blunted—not in their importance to individuals but as weapons in the political theater. What's motivating religious conservatives now, says Campolo, is a vision of America as God's own special country, and free-market capitalism as crucial to the nation's flourishing. Everyone who doesn't see things this way, according to this perspective, is a socialist or a communist—“Pinkos who are subverting America under the auspices of the president of the United States,” he says. “The marriage between evangelicalism and patriotic nationalism is so strong that anybody who is raising questions about loyalty to the old, laissez-faire capitalist system is ex post facto unpatriotic, un-

American, and by association non-Christian.” <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/12/09/one-nation-under-god.html>

Thoughts? Where is our loyalty? Where should it be?

The lesson asks us to read Jeremiah 7:1-11

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² “Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message:

“ ‘Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. ³ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!” ⁵ If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, ⁶ if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, **and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm,** ⁷ then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. ⁸ But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. ⁹ “ Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.

Thoughts about this passage?

What is God telling them? Why will harm come to them? Will God use His power to punish, or will they destroy their own minds and sever their connection with God?

What were they doing? Living in harmony with Satan's methods and presenting God as Satan represents Him, thus misrepresenting God.

What about today? Do we say, "The temple, the temple" or rather "The Sabbath, The Sabbath"? Do we ever rest secure in our organizational affiliation, or traditions rather than in our intimacy with God? Do we ever claim to be God's representatives while misrepresenting Him?

Thoughts on practical steps we can take to prevent substituting religious form for spiritual substance?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "The book of Jeremiah..." thoughts?

How do you understand inspiration?

Does the fact that the book of Jeremiah was written by his scribe rather than by Jeremiah concern you?

Does it trouble you that the Bible is not written word for word as dictation from God?

If the Bible is not a direct dictation from God, but instead it contains ideas, concepts, truths God revealed to His prophets and they expressed those ideas in their own way, what does that mean to us when we read it?

Can we be safe in proof texting our way through Scripture? What is the only safe way to be sure we understand the true meaning?

Is it not in requiring all the books of Scripture to harmonize around the central theme of God's character as revealed in Jesus?

Whenever we move God from the center of scripture and make the central focus of the Bible about something else we will begin losing focus.

What other ideas replace God as center focus of scripture?

- Our salvation
- Healthy living
- Rules for society

Read bottom pink section – thoughts?

TUESDAY

Baruch reads Jeremiah to the people and then leadership inquires what he is teaching- how does leadership respond to the message?

The king cuts up the scroll and burns it.

Why would the king do this? What was the message of the scroll? That they should humble themselves and accept Babylonian oversight - but the king wouldn't listen.

How did the king treat Jeremiah and Baruch?

If we have truth about God to share should we share it even though we know it won't be popular or some will turn against us?

How do we balance our responsibility to witness the truth with Christ's admonition:

Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. Matt 7:6

When do we speak boldly and when do we hold our peace? Where do you draw the line?

Speak only to those who want to hear?

What principles do you use in knowing when to speak and when to keep silent?

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, “Of course, feeling dejected....” Thoughts?

Is it true we all struggle with powerful feelings, and sometimes these feelings are very discouraging?

Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement--days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; days when troubles harass the soul, **till death seems preferable to life**. It is then that many lose their hold on God. . . . Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God's providences we should see **angels seeking to save us from ourselves**, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills, and new faith, new life, would spring into being.... {CC 213.3}

Thoughts?

We all struggle with feelings, but do our feelings reliably inform us of our true situation?

Any examples?

- Elijah after Carmel
- Disciples after Crucifixion
- Mary and Martha after Lazarus died
- Others?

What about today? When I was in my early twenties I lost a job and was discouraged and dejected. I asked God, why? The following week I found another job, there I met a person who became a friend. She was premed at UTC. I wanted to go but hadn't gotten around to it. With her encouragement I went back to school and became a physician – changed my entire life. God knew I needed that little extra encouragement and I am so glad I lost that job.

If I could have seen things from His perspective I would not have been discouraged.

What about love – when we have love in our hearts will we always feel good? What would you say is the greatest demonstration of love in the history of the universe? Would it not be Christ’s sacrifice at the Cross? What were His human emotions like?

Yet, somehow, through the agony of Gethsemane the scriptures say he went forward for the joy set BEFORE Him. He looked forward to joy which would be achieved through the valley of trial.

The greatest demonstration of love was not based on feelings but on understanding!

THURSDAY

The lesson asks at the top to read Jeremiah 45 and asks, “What does this passage tell us about God?”

This is what Jeremiah the prophet told Baruch son of Neriah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, after Baruch had written on a scroll the words Jeremiah was then dictating: ² “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: ³ You said, ‘Woe to me! The Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.’ ”

⁴ The Lord said, “Say this to him: ‘This is what the Lord says: I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted, throughout the land. ⁵ Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the Lord, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life.’ ”

Thoughts?

What does this passage say to you about God?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, “The spirit of opposition...” thoughts? Do you see this happening today? Is it only those outside the church who refuse to heed warnings, or within as well?

Some have alleged that our class is doing this – how can you tell the right from the wrong, the truth from the error to ensure we don’t do this?

Must we compare Scripture with Scripture, using all the inspired record? But what if someone opposes the truth claiming scripture and writes long treatises opposing the truth, how can one know which interpretation of scripture is correct? We must harmonize, scripture, science and experience, use testable evidence, the laws of God’s known universe, the principles of His government, the life of Christ as a touchstone all to help differentiate the truth.

Why will there ultimately be no help from heaven for those who do this? What help does God provide? Is God not the God of truth? Is He not the God of love? And if one rejects truth and love and instead prefers lies, what happens to the mind? What can God do to help such a one?

Read questions 1,3,5 and discuss.