

The Church Militant

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The Book of the Law

Prophets and Kings, p. 393-396:

The silent yet powerful influences set in operation by the messages of the prophets regarding the Babylonian captivity, did much to prepare the way for a reformation that took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. This reform movement, by which threatened judgments were averted for a season, was brought about in a wholly unexpected manner through the discovery and study of a portion of Holy Scripture that for many years had been strangely misplaced and lost...

It was the observance of the statutes recorded by Moses, especially those given in the book of the covenant, which forms a part of Deuteronomy, that had made the reign of Hezekiah so prosperous. But Manassah had dared set aside these statutes; and during his reign the temple copy of the book of the Law, through careless neglect, had become lost. Thus for many years the people generally were deprived of its instruction.

The long-lost manuscript was found in the temple by Hilkiah, the high priest, while the building was undergoing extensive repairs in harmony with King Josiah's plan for the preservation of the sacred structure...

Josiah was deeply stirred as he heard read for the first time the exhortations and warnings recorded in this ancient manuscript. Never before had he realized so fully the plainness with which God had set before Israel "life and death, blessing and cursing" (Deuteronomy 30:19); and how repeatedly they had been urged to choose the way of life, that they might become a praise in the earth, a blessing to all nations...

The book abounded in assurances of God's willingness to save to the uttermost those who should place their trust fully in Him...

These and similar passages revealed to Josiah God's love

for His people, and His abhorrence of sin.

History Repeats Itself

Solomon has this to say:

Ecclesiastes 1

⁹ The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

The work of God in the earth presents, from age to age, a striking similarity in every great reformation or religious movement. The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same. The important movements of the present have their parallel in those of the past, and the experience of the church in former ages has lessons of great value for our own time.

So it was that the message as given to Elders Waggoner and Jones and as published by them in their various books, lay hidden in the dust of library storerooms and odd places for decades after the rejection in the period from 1888 to 1893.

But the time came when in the United States and in Australia particularly, these books were rediscovered and read with the keenest of interest, which set in motion a revival of spiritual interest and of life such as marked the discovery of the book of the law back in the days of good king Josiah.

Now, the moment they appeared among the churches, the church acted very quickly to spread the strongest disapproval for those books. This disapproval immediately reminded us of the following statement:

Nehemiah 2

¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

After its discovery, the book of the Law caused a wonderful

revival and reformation among God's people. So also with the books of Waggoner and Jones. History thus once again repeated itself.

God's Messenger

When the time comes for the reviving of the truth of God in an age of apostasy and general departure from the Lord, then the God of heaven raises up a messenger of His own choosing to carry the truth and the light forward. In the time of Josiah, Jeremiah was that messenger.

Prophets and Kings, p. 409:

Among those who had hoped for a permanent, spiritual revival as the result of the reformation under Josiah was Jeremiah, called of God to the prophetic office while still a youth, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. A member of the Levitical priesthood, Jeremiah had been trained from childhood for holy service. In those happy years of preparation he little realized that he had been ordained from birth to be "a prophet unto the nations;" and when the divine call came, he was overwhelmed with a sense of his unworthiness. "Ah Lord God!" he exclaimed "behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." Jeremiah 1:5, 6.

In the youthful Jeremiah, God saw one who would be true to his trust and who would stand for the right against great opposition. In childhood he had proved faithful; and now he was to endure hardness, as a good soldier of the cross.

"Say not, I am a child," the Lord bade his chosen messenger; "for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak...For, behold, I have made thee this day a defense city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." Jeremiah 1:7, 8, 17-19...

Yet amid the general ruin into which the nation was rapidly passing, Jeremiah was often permitted to look beyond the distressing scenes of the present to the glorious

prospects of the future, when God's people should be ransomed from the land of the enemy and planted again in Zion...

Yet the prophet was to accompany these messages with assurances of forgiveness to all who should turn from their evil doing.

Prophets and Kings, p. 409-411:

As a wise master-builder, Jeremiah at the very beginning of his lifework sought to encourage the men of Judah to lay the foundations of their spiritual life broad and deep, by making thorough work of repentance. Long had they been building with material likened by the apostle Paul to wood, hay and stubble, and by Jeremiah himself to dross. "Refuse silver shall men call them," he declared of the impenitent nation, "because the Lord hath rejected them." Jeremiah 6:30, margin.

Now they were urged to begin building wisely and for eternity, casting aside the rubbish of apostasy and unbelief, and using as foundation material the pure gold, the refined silver, the precious stones—faith and obedience and good works—which are alone acceptable in the sight of a holy God....

The seeds of truth that had sprung up and given promise of an abundant harvest, had been choked by thorns. Another such backsliding would be fatal; and the Lord sought to arouse the nation to a realization of their danger. Only as they should prove loyal to Jehovah could they hope for the divine favor and for prosperity.

Jeremiah called their attention repeatedly to the counsels given in Deuteronomy. More than any other of the prophets, he emphasized the teachings of the Mosaic law and showed how these might bring the highest spiritual blessing to the nation and to every individual heart. "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein," he pleaded, "and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6:16.

Prophets and Kings, p. 412:

Thus the prophet stood firmly for the sound principles of right living so clearly outlined in the book of the law... "Break up your fallow ground," he pleaded, "and sow not among thorns." "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness,

that thou mayest be saved.” Jeremiah 4:3, 14.

But by the great mass of the people the call to repentance and reformation was unheeded.

Cruel were the mockings he was called upon to endure. His sensitive soul was pierced through and through by the arrows of derision hurled at him by those who despised his messages and made light of his burden for their conversion...

But the faithful prophet was daily strengthened to endure. “The Lord is with me as a mighty terrible One,” he declared in faith; “therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: They shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.” Jeremiah 20:11.

The Builders of the Wall

Later there came another time when the Lord worked to bring about a wonderful revival and restoration among His people. This was the occasion when they had returned from Babylon to rebuild the city and the temple. Again the Lord raised up His own messenger in the person of Nehemiah.

Prophets and Kings, p. 636-638:

Choosing a few men whom he knew to be worthy of confidence, Nehemiah told them of the circumstances that had led him to come to Jerusalem, the object that he wished to accomplish, and the plans he proposed to follow. Their interest in his undertaking was at once enlisted and their assistance secured.

Nehemiah bore a royal commission requiring the inhabitants to cooperate with him in rebuilding the walls of the city, but he did not depend upon the exercise of authority. He sought rather to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people, knowing that a union of hearts as well as of hands was essential in the great work before him...

Nehemiah presented before the people their reproach among the heathen—their religion dishonored, their God blasphemed. He told them that in a distant land he had heard of their affliction, that he had entreated the favor of heaven in their behalf, and that, as he was praying, he had determined to ask permission from the king to come to their

assistance. He had asked God that the king might not only grant this permission, but might also invest him with the authority and give him the help needed for the work; and his prayer had been answered in such a way as to show that the plan was of the Lord...

Nehemiah's whole soul was in the enterprise he had undertaken. His hope, his energy, his enthusiasm, his determination, were contagious, inspiring others with the same high courage and lofty purpose. Each man became a Nehemiah in his turn, and helped to make stronger the heart and hand of his neighbor.

When the enemies of Israel heard what the Jews were hoping to accomplish, they laughed them to scorn, saying, "What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" But Nehemiah answered, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem."

Let's compare the above statement with these words:

The Desire of Ages, p. 538:

The miracles He [Jesus] performed on the Sabbath were all for the relief of the afflicted, but the Pharisees had sought to condemn Him as a Sabbathbreaker. They had tried to arouse the Herodians against Him. They represented that He was seeking to set up a rival kingdom and consulted with them how to destroy Him. To excite the Romans against Him, they had represented Him as trying to subvert their authority. They had tried every pretext to cut Him off from influencing the people. But so far their attempts had been foiled. The multitudes who witnessed His works of mercy and heard His pure and holy teachings knew that these were not the deeds and words of a Sabbathbreaker or blasphemer.

The apostles of Christ after the outpouring of Pentecost found that the reception to the message was still the same.

Acts 17

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

² And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three

Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,

³ Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

⁴ And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 229-230:

As in the places formerly entered, the apostles met with determined opposition. "The Jews which believed not" were "moved with envy." These Jews were not then in favor with the Roman power, because not long before, they had raised an insurrection in Rome. They were looked upon with suspicion, and their liberty was in a measure restricted. They now saw an opportunity to take advantage of circumstances to re-establish themselves in favor, and at the same time to throw reproach upon the apostles and the converts to Christianity.

This they set about doing by uniting with "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," by which means they succeeded in setting "all the city on an uproar."...

...Those who today teach unpopular truths need not be discouraged if at times they meet with no more favorable reception, even from those who claim to be Christians, than did Paul and his fellow workers from the people among whom they labored. The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayers, and move forward with faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus. They must exalt Christ as man's mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, the One in whom all the sacrifices of the Old Testament dispensation centered, and through whose atoning sacrifice the transgressors of God's law may find peace and pardon.

The Slothful Class

There is yet another class who appear whenever the Lord is working and they are those who are well content to receive all that they can get from the blessings of the message while they refuse to put their weight behind the cause of truth. This

class is referred to back in the days of Nehemiah:

Prophets and Kings, p. 639-642:

There were a few, the Tekoite nobles, who “put not their necks to the work of their Lord.” The memory of these slothful servants is branded with shame, and has been handed down as a warning to all future generations.

In every religious movement there are some who, while they cannot deny that the cause is God’s, still hold themselves aloof, refusing to make any effort to help. It were well for such ones to remember the record kept on high—that book in which there are no omissions, no mistakes, and out of which they will be judged. There every neglected opportunity to do service for God is recorded; and there, too, every deed of faith and love is held in everlasting remembrance...

Nor did Nehemiah’s energy abate, now that the work was actually begun. With tireless vigilance he superintended the building, directing the workmen, noting the hindrances, and providing for emergencies. Along the whole extent of that three miles of wall, his influence was constantly felt. With timely words he encouraged the fearful, aroused the laggard, and approved the diligent...

In his many activities, Nehemiah did not forget the source of his strength. His heart was constantly uplifted to God, the great Overseer of all. “The God of heaven,” he exclaimed, “He will prosper us;” and the words, echoed and re-echoed, thrilled the hearts of all the workers on the wall.

But the restoration of the defenses of Jerusalem did not go forward unhindered. Satan was working to stir up opposition, and bring discouragement. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, his principal agents in this movement, now set themselves to hinder the work of rebuilding. They endeavored to cause division among the workmen. They ridiculed the efforts of the builders, declaring the enterprise an impossibility, and predicting failure.

“What do these feeble Jews?” exclaimed Sanballat mockingly; “will they fortify themselves?...will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?” Tobiah, still more contemptuous, added, “Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.”

The builders were soon beset by more active opposition... The report was spread that Nehemiah was plotting against the Persian monarch, intending to exalt himself as a king over Israel, and that all who aided him were traitors.

But Nehemiah continued to look to God for guidance and support, and “the people had a mind to work.”

Prophets and Kings, p. 643:

Discouragement came from still another source. “The Jews which dwelt by,” those who were taking no part in the work, gathered up the statements and reports of their enemies and used these to weaken courage and create disaffection.

But taunts and ridicule, opposition and threats, seemed only to inspire Nehemiah with firmer determination and to arouse him to greater watchfulness. He recognized the dangers that must be met in this warfare with their enemies, but his courage was undaunted.

“We made our prayer unto our God” he declares, “and set a watch against them day and night.” “Therefore set I in the lower places, behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said...to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”

As it was in Nehemiah’s day, we today wrestle not with flesh and blood, as the apostle has declared in building this spiritual temple.

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that

ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

¹⁵ And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God:

¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

¹⁹ And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

²⁰ For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

1 Corinthians 10

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

⁵ Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Prophets and Kings, p. 644-645:

The opposition and discouragement that the builders in Nehemiah's day met from open enemies and pretended friends is typical of the experience that those to-day will have who work for God. Christians are tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of avowed friends and helpers. Derision and reproach are hurled at them. And the same enemy that leads to contempt, at a favorable opportunity uses more cruel and violent measures.

Satan takes advantage of every unconsecrated element for the accomplishment of his purposes. Among those who profess to be the supporters of God's cause there are those who

unite with His enemies and thus lay His cause open to the attacks of His bitterest foes. Even some who desire the work of God to prosper will yet weaken the hands of His servants by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of His adversaries.

Satan works with marvelous success through his agents, and all who yield to their influence are subject to a bewitching power that destroys the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. But, like Nehemiah, God's people are neither to fear nor to despise their enemies. Putting their trust in God, they are to go steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, and committing to His providence the cause for which they stand.

Amidst great discouragement, Nehemiah made God his trust, his sure defense. And He who was the support of His servant then has been the dependence of his people in every age. In every crisis his people may confidently declare, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them, and bring to naught all their counsels. The response of faith today will be the response made by Nehemiah, "Our God shall fight for us;" for God is in the work, and no man can prevent its ultimate success.

Working with Determination and Faith

2 Chronicles 20

¹⁵ ...Hearken you, all Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you king Jehoshaphat, Thus says the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

²⁰ And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat, stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall you prosper.

Prophets and Kings, p. 659-660:

As the time of the end draws near, Satan's temptations will be brought to bear with greater power upon God's workers. He will employ human agents to mock and revile those who "build the wall"...Truth is stronger than error, and right

will prevail over wrong.

Neither should they allow their enemies to gain their friendship and sympathy, and thus lure them from their post of duty. He who by any unguarded act exposes the cause of God to reproach, or weakens the hands of his fellow workers, brings upon his own character a stain not easily removed, and places a serious obstacle in the way of his future usefulness...

In Nehemiah's firm devotion to the work of God, and his equally firm reliance on God, lay the reason of the failure of his enemies to draw him into their power. The soul that is indolent falls an easy prey to temptation; but in the life that has a noble aim, an absorbing purpose, evil finds little foothold. The faith of him who is constantly advancing does not weaken; for above, beneath, beyond, he recognizes Infinite Love, working out all things to accomplish His good purpose. God's true servants work with a determination that will not fail, because the throne of grace is their constant dependence.

Prophets and Kings, p. 668:

As they had listened from day to day to the words of the law, the people had been convicted of their transgressions, and of the sins of their nation in past generations. They saw that it was because of a departure from God that His protecting care had been withdrawn and that the children of Abraham had been scattered in foreign lands, and they determined to seek His mercy, and to pledge themselves to walk in His commandments...

...their leaders encouraged them to believe that God, according to his promise, heard their prayers. They must not only mourn and weep, and repent, but they must believe that God pardoned them...

For those who are convicted of sin and weighed down with a sense of their unworthiness, there are lessons of faith and encouragement in this record...

Every true turning to the Lord brings abiding joy into the life. When a sinner yields to the influence of the Holy Spirit, he sees his own guilt and defilement in contrast with the holiness of the great searcher of hearts. He sees himself condemned as a transgressor. But he is not, because of this, to

give way to despair; for his pardon has already been secured. He may rejoice in the sense of sins forgiven, in the love of a pardoning heavenly Father. It is God's glory to encircle sinful, repentant human beings in the arms of His love, to bind up their wounds, to cleanse them from sin, and to clothe them with the garments of salvation.

Prophets and Kings, p. 675:

In the work of reform to be carried forward today, there is need of men who, like Ezra and Nehemiah, will not palliate or excuse sin, nor shrink from vindicating the honor of God. Those upon whom rests the burden of this work, will not hold their peace when wrong is done, neither will they cover evil with a cloak of false charity. They will remember that God is no respecter of persons, and that severity to a few may prove mercy to many. They will remember also that in the one who rebukes evil, the Spirit of Christ should ever be revealed.

Prophets and Kings, p. 677-678:

The work of restoration and reform carried on by the returned exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, presents a picture of a work of spiritual restoration that is to be wrought in the closing days of this earth's history. The remnant of Israel were a feeble people, exposed to the ravages of their enemies; but through them God purposed to preserve in the earth a knowledge of Himself, and His law...

The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the principles that are the foundation of the kingdom of God. They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law—the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard.

God will use men, at the close of work, which the leading brethren reject as being unfit to operate in the work of the Lord:

The Review and Herald, July 9, 1895:

Our Leader has all power in heaven and in earth. He will use men as agents for the accomplishment of his purposes

whom some of the brethren would reject as unfit to engage in the work.

Happy and blessed indeed will be the men and the women who are prepared to see and to face the truth about themselves and in seeing it have both the faith to believe that the Lord can take away the evil and replace it with the good and the faith to actually have the Lord do it for them.