

The King has come. We are no longer under the law given by Moses on Mount Sinai. Fourteen centuries later the King has gently given His decrees from a different mount, Matthew 5,6 & 7, located in the Promised Land Moses was forbidden to enter. But the city above, on the heart of those of faith in all ages past, is still before the Lord Jesus and us today. So the Hebrew believers then in Jerusalem, and we today, are again reminded,

***14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.***

They may not have realized how literal these words were. The city of Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, the ordinances and the rituals they had once counted so dear were doomed to destruction very shortly. And unless they fled they would all be killed or dispersed world wide as refugees. The Lord Jesus, while still here, had told them of this and warned them to be ready to flee. See Luke 21:20-24 for a graphic description of this disaster. For the Jews living then there was no continuing city on earth and no continuing religion. The altar from which they ate offerings would be destroyed. It was replaced by an Altar of which those who served the altar in the temple in Jerusalem had no right to partake, Jesus Christ! Those animal offering were no longer acceptable to God for the Jews had slaughtered His Son, outside the gate of Jerusalem. He was the Offering for sin the animal offerings pointed to. To continue to present and partake of the animal offering was to reject His supreme offering on the cross. And to allow those who still partook of the animal offerings and rituals to sit at the Lord's table and partake of the Lord's Supper, emblems of His death, was treasonous. They have no right to eat there.

There are today those who regard the bread and the wine of the Lord's supper to be sacred. They teach substantiation, that the emblems literally become His body and blood needed to periodically renew their salvation. They disregard the perfection and completeness of His once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross. They have, in effect, returned to the "camp" where repetitive sacrifices were made. There would be reproach for the faithful for drawing a line here, but it would be bearing Christ's reproach. The example is taken from the very offerings they were to forsake. While the blood was poured out at the altar, the carcases of the sin offerings were carried outside the camp and burned in a clean place, See Exodus 29:14; Leviticus 4:11-12,21; 6:30; 9:11; 16:27; Numbers 19:3. Jesus suffered outside the gate of the city where they had taken Him and crucified Him. Go back in there? To that? Never! Crucify anew the Lord of glory? No! Jesus meant what He said and said what He meant when He gave that tremendous cry of victory, "IT IS FINISHED!" If you discover you are under a false religious belief "Go forth to Him outside that gate." Another telling example of going outside the camp is found in the actions Moses took when descending from Mount Sinai and found Israel worshiping a golden calf,

Exodus 33:7-11, and note all of Exodus 32 and 33.

Separation from the camp is imperative if we are to be faithful to Him who died for us. This is a much misunderstood concept and controversial step for a believer to take, for it may mean separation from fellow believers. Didn't Christ die to unite all believers into one body? Yes, He did. But didn't He also die so His own on earth could be unified, sanctified, holy believers, as separate from the world as He is now, John 17:15-20? Yes, faithfulness may mean reproach, not only from the world but "the camp." The Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, various Protestant faiths and independent congregations all disrespect His call to go forth unto Him outside the camp. These days, in many respects, they are the camp. And there are many lovely believers involved in them.

The believer's sacrifices are no longer to be repeated offerings of flesh and blood animals, first fruits and other material things. Instead there is continuing praise, thanksgiving and giving. The fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. Are praise and thanksgiving sacrificial? Yes, a human soul giving praise to another and not himself is truly humbling. We sacrifice thoughts of self worth, so ingrained in human nature by Adam's sin, to praise God our Creator and Savior. And yes, there are the sacrifices of material worth too, but in the form of giving in the name of the Lord. As part of our united worship, while assembled weekly to remember the Lord, we give to Him, through the local assembly. We distribute this to those laboring in His work, whether evangelists or teacher-pastors, and to the needy, whether believers or not.

***1Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.***

We are to personally give directly to others too. Yet perhaps just as important is a personal visit or showing personal interest and a word of encouragement to another.

***Galatians 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. 9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.***

A fourth sacrifice is obedience. Obey those who watch for our souls and for the well being of the assembly. These are local elders, 1Timothy 3. They in turn are to watch faithfully as those who shall give account for their own faithfulness and conduct. What a joy to watch over faithful, devoted, godly saints. What grief when one departs from the path as some were among the Hebrews, and still do today. While the leaders are not punished for the waywardness of their charges they grieve as shepherds and fathers for them. And we as sheep need to place ourselves under their care and guidance if we are to avoid spiritual disaster. What a privilege and responsibility it is

when a young believer submits himself in the Lord to an elder for instruction and encouragement and guidance.

So oversight remains in place, though we have no hierarchy commanded, exemplified or endorsed in New Testament scripture. Yet the “camp” has by and large returned to the practices of the Old Testament, incorporating a priesthood, a clergy, a hierarchy, rituals, liturgy, choirs, etc. mimicking those of the Old. Relationships between the “Church” and the secular governments similar to those of ancient Israel have been established as well. A government subject to the Lord through the priesthood was God’s prescribed order for Israel before the Cross. But not now. We see the national churches under the government or the government is under the church. Either way it is simply spiritual adultery. One might say the harlot has ridden the beast of secular power for centuries in some countries while in others she is still attempting to mount and control it. “Come out of her my people!” Revelation 18:4, read Revelation 17 & 18, and contrast 2Corinthians 11,

*2Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Paul also speaks to necessary separation in 2Timothy,

*2Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. 20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

Peter calls for judgement to begin at the House of God,

*1Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Emotional and natural ties and deeply entrained traditions often confuse and deter a believer from going forth, coming out, from evil once it is exposed to him by the word of God. As we read here the Hebrew believers had their own rude awakening in early New Testament days. The principles remain the same for us today though the circumstances may differ. We can’t evade the call just because this was written to the Hebrews. Nevertheless, heed it in a loving attitude.

Now the author closes with a variety of comments and requests that display his loving care and concern for them, his countrymen. For this must be a Jewish believer that is writing, though not named. Many feel that the style, the powerful thrust yet earnest thoroughness and masterly attention to detail, the in-depth knowledge of the Law and the history of Judaism all point to what one would expect if Paul wrote this letter. Certainly his yearning and zeal for his countrymen was unsurpassed, except by his Lord. Though he was clearly sent as the apostle to the Gentiles and faithfully fulfilled this charge, he finally was given to

write to those of his beloved nation. In his wide ranging travels among the nations he customarily went first to the local synagogue in each town he came to. There he was most likely to find souls seeking the God he served. I like to believe the epistle to the Hebrews embodies all of the preaching and reasoning Paul was accustomed to bring to the congregations in each synagogue he entered. I wonder if it would speak to those in synagogues today — if they would just read it carefully. They will after the Rapture!

Some of the closing newsy remarks also point to Paul as the writer. His evident companionship with Timothy and knowledge of his release from prison signals Paul was now also freed but still in Rome, v. 24b. His desire to go to Rome, Romans 1:9-13, and 15:15-32, had been derailed by his overwhelming desire for the salvation of his countrymen, these Hebrews, Acts 21:10-14, Romans 9:1-3. This had detoured him to Jerusalem where he was arrested. So he reached Rome the hard way. Yet God purposed that he witness to its government officials and ultimately to the Emperor himself. And he finally did, 2Timothy 4:17. Yet he still desires to be restored to the Hebrew saints in Jerusalem. And He covets their prayers for him and his work. He has a clear conscience opening the way for their earnest supportive prayers which may have been hindered after his last visit there where he had been unjustly arrested. Perhaps his labors among the Gentiles still made some of them uneasy. It did earlier, as related in Acts.

Now he blesses them.

*20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from [among] the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen* [21a. perfect in you]

Here he calls upon the Great Shepherd. How appropriate for them to be called to the Protector and Leader addressed in Psalm 23 in this valley of the shadow of death where they found themselves at this time. What an example He is for those who shepherd the flock, v. 17. Others have found the three Psalms centered on Psalm 23 depict the divine Shepherd in different aspects.

Psalm 22 the Good Shepherd

*John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

Psalm 23 the Great Shepherd

*Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant*

Psalm 24 the Chief Shepherd

*1Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

Come out from, go in and stay with. Let affectionate love motivate and characterize all we do in faithfulness for our Lord Jesus Christ, bearing His reproach.

Grace be with you all. Amen.

By Ron Canner, June 10, 2009