

THE CHURCH PROMISED AND PROPHESED

As one traces the scheme of redemption from eternity to Calvary and examines the tremendous lengths to which God went in order to bring about the church, he should stand in awe at the magnificent manifestation of God's great wisdom (cf. Ephesians 3:10). The church revealed on the pages of God's wonderful Word is by no means an accident or afterthought, but is the very fulfillment of God's promises, predictions, and plans from eternity!

By giving in to temptation and transgressing God's law, Adam and Eve severed their righteous relationship with Deity (Genesis 3). Heaven's great and perfect plan to redeem and reconcile man then went into action. God provided the first glimpse into this soul-saving plan when He declared the following to Satan: "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*" (Genesis 3:15). While the seed of woman would suffer slightly by the actions of the devil, that same seed would ultimately deliver a crushing deathblow to the archenemy of God and man.

One would do well to consider the declaration of Genesis 3:15 in light of Matthew 16:18 and its fulfillment. In response to Peter's confession of the Christ, Jesus declared, "*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18). Even thou Jesus, the seed of Genesis 3:15, would pass through the gates of Hades (that is, He would experience death), that passage would allow Him to purchase the church with His blood (Acts 20:28) and ultimately triumph over the grave. Thus, the promise made to Satan in the garden finds its fulfillment in Christ's church, or body, in which God reconciles man back to Himself (cf. Ephesians 2:16).

Of course, much transpired between God's words to the devil and Christ's purchase of the church. For example, according to Genesis 12:1-3, God made a covenant with Abram (later called Abraham) that initiated the beginning of a nation—a nation that would bring about the Savior of the world, the builder and founder of the church. In order to accomplish the promise of Genesis 3:15, God established a line of descendants, the nation mentioned above, and a tribe through whom the head of the church would come. Notice the covenant of Genesis 12:1-3:

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Through the "great nation" of Israel came the Christ, Who in turn offers redemption to "all families of the earth" - Jew and Gentile alike (cf. Galatians 3:8) - in His body, the church (cf. I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:11-16).

The promises of Genesis 3:15 and 12:1-3 are not the only occasions where God spoke of His plans for Christ's church. A number of Old Testament prophets presented crucial details of that heavenly-designed institution to which the saved would be added (cf. Acts 2:47). The rugged prophet Amos, for example, told the divided people of his day that God would "*raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof*" (Amos 9:11). Amos continued by stating that this tabernacle would include all who are called by the Lord's name—both Jew and Gentile. By inspiration, James revealed that this figurative language applied to the church which Jesus build (Acts 15:14-18).

Isaiah was another Old Testament prophet who revealed key points about the church of Christ. Consider the following:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

When one considers the New Testament describes the church as the "house of God" (I Timothy 3:15) and Christ's "house" (Hebrews 3:), there should be no doubt that Isaiah's prophecy definitely deals with that same divine institution.

Notice the details Isaiah gave about the church: (1) He said the church ("the Lord's house") would be established in "the last days." The *last days* refers to the final dispensation of time which began with Christ and His covenant, and which shall continue until the end of time (c. Hebrews 1:1-2). (2) He said, "All nations shall flow unto it." This is indicative of the church's

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

GIDEON'S GALLANT GAIN

Text: _____

- I. The _____ of Gideon
 - A. He was _____ to _____
 - B. He was _____ to _____
- II. The _____ of Gideon
 - A. _____ Begins
 - B. _____ Exceeded
 - C. _____ Concluded
- III. The _____ of Gideon
 - A. The _____ Trickeration
 - B. The _____ Fighting
 - C. The _____ Conquest

JOB'S JUBILEE

Text: _____

- I. _____ and _____
 - A. The Devil's _____
 - B. The Divine _____
 - C. The Duel _____
- II. _____ and _____
 - A. Eliphaz's _____
 - B. Bildad's _____
 - C. Zophar's _____
 - D. Eliphaz's _____
- III. _____ and _____
 - A. Job's _____
 - B. Jehovah's _____
 - C. Job's _____

being made up of all races and kingdoms, Jews and Gentiles (cf. Galatians 3:28). (3) He said the church would begin in Jerusalem and from there "shall go forth the law." This is a picture of the church starting in that specific city, and then spreading its message outward.

Each of these details finds its fulfillment in the church described in the New Testament! Acts 2 records how the church came into existence at the right time (in the last days) and in the right place (Jerusalem), while the rest of Acts records how it spread in the right manner (from Jerusalem to Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the world). Any church that started in any place, time, or manner different than Isaiah foretold cannot be Christ's church.

A third prophet to reveal important details about the church of Christ was Daniel. Whereas Amos described the church as the tabernacle of David and Isaiah described it as the house of the Lord, Daniel described the church as the kingdom of God. Concluding his interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel declared, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44). The kingdom, which was "at hand" (or, about to appear) during the preaching of John the baptizer and Jesus (Matthew 3:1; 4:17), was in existence by the time Paul penned Colossians 1:13: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Placing this fact in the spotlight of Matthew 16:18-19 where Jesus used church and kingdom synonymously, one must conclude that the kingdom about which Daniel prophesied is the church about which one reads in the New Testament.

Returning to Daniel 2:44, one notes that God was going to set up His kingdom in the days of "these kings." Just who were these kings? Studying Daniel 2:36-43, secular historians and biblical scholars agree that Daniel spoke of four world empires: (1) the Babylonian Empire (the head of gold, vs. 37-38), (2) the Medo-Persian Empire (the breast of and arms of silver, vs. 39), (3) the Grecian Empire (the belly of brass and its thighs, vs. 39), and (4) the Roman Empire (the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay, vs. 40-43). God's kingdom, which is Christ's church, was to be set up during the Roman Empire. Again, Acts 2 pictures the church coming into existence at just the right time—in the first century, during the reign of the Roman kings!

Just like Isaiah, Daniel gave details about the nature of the kingdom, or church. He described it as indestructible. Consider this with Hebrews 12:28 in mind: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." No military might in the world can stop the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Rather than being overtaken and destroyed, it continues to consume the hearts and minds of all nations by preaching the Gospel to every creature! Truly, the church of which Jesus is head and for which He shed His innocent blood is the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and prophecies. It is the manifestation of God's wonderful wisdom, and its doors are open to all who will enter into it through obedience to Christ's Gospel. "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob" (Isaiah 2:3).

-Preston Silcox

THE BOOK OF GODLY PATIENCE

The book of Job is one of the most widely contemplated books of the Bible because of its central theme of which most in the world interestingly pursue. The question of human suffering is as old as man himself. And while all answers can obviously not be answered, this record of Job's life can satisfy many curiosities about the topic.

Perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of this book bearing Job's name is its placement in Bible chronology. Job is in fact the oldest book of the Bible. Though it is not placed in the Old Testament until after the historical books concluded by Esther, it in fact precedes Moses' writings by hundreds of years, and there are many proofs of such. In Job 1, it is recorded that Job offered sacrifices for his family in the same way as did the patriarchs of Genesis. Likewise, Job gave an inheritance to his daughters along with his sons, a practice condemned under the law of Moses because the inheritance was to go to sons unless there were no living sons. Also, Job shaved his head while mourning for his children, but under the Mosaic law the shaving of the head was unlawful (Deuteronomy 14:1-2). There are other proofs as to Job's placement in history but these are sufficient to prove that he did in fact live during the Patriarch period.

However, where in that 3,000 year period is also a question. In Job 9:5, Job makes a personal mention of the flood by stating that it removed the mountains and overturned them in anger. While he obviously did not live through the flood, it does appear that he personally saw the after effects of the flood, therefore being born and living at some time shortly afterwards. Also, the secular writings of the Egyptian Execration Tablets (dated at 4600 B.C.) indicate that the name of Job was well known by the time of Abraham. Therefore, Job would have lived at some point between the flood and the time in which Abraham lived.

Job's story is one of trial and tribulation. The things he endured while attacked by Satan were beyond comprehension given the circumstances, but his response to them being falling down and worshipping the God of heaven characterizes the kind of man Job was. Job was a wealthy, prestigious, and well-respected man. But when Satan went on the offensive against God, as permitted by God, he became the target of unwarranted attacks. He lost his possessions, his livestock, his servants, his family, his health, and his friends. Anyone of these losses is enough to bring the average man to his knees, but Job withstood and overcame. After his trials of chapters one and two, Job is encouraged by the arrival of his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu. Their presence was thought to be a change of events in Job's life that thus far was only given to disappointment. However, their presence instead would be further trouble. From chapters three through thirty-seven there are a series of speeches in which each of the "friends" attack Job telling him that the reason he is suffering is because of evil in his life. Then after each speech by a "friend" Job is given the opportunity to defend himself, which he does successfully. In fact, Job is so successful against Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, that when Elihu finally takes his turn at the end, he begins by rebuking the other three for their lack of competence before going on a tirade against Job. Finally, beginning in chapter thirty-eight, Job gets his wish of hearing from God Himself, but not to the extent he had hoped. Wherein Job had wanted to discuss these matters about what God's reasoning was for his suffering, God began a discourse of questions that would last until chapter forty-one in which Job was convinced of his humanity versus God's deity. It was then in the final chapter of the book that Job repents of his attitude and is then blessed with double what he had before.

The picture of Christ in Job is found throughout but summed up by Job 19:25. In the midst of Job seeking his go-between, he makes the statement, "*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth...*" These words are those still sung today by the people of God, knowing that the redeemer of all mankind ever lives. Christ was the redeemer that would stand upon the earth in the latter day, and He continues to be the redeemer to whom man still looks in anticipation of eternal redemption. So similar to Job's state of no hope to blessed by God is man's state today. It is exactly that transition that every individual makes from sin to righteousness through Christ.

The book of Job is an extraordinary book to any who care to delve into its wisdom. The answer to the question of human suffering abounds to the fact that human suffering has nothing to do with God's inhumanity toward man, but rather man's inhumanity toward each other. If only the teachings of the Lord regarding brotherly love were enacted in more lives, then surely this plague would be stunted in growth. Let us strive to be more like Job in godly patience so that we too will be blessed more in our latter end than in our first.

-Andy Brewer