

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

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

## A DIRTY WORD

When driving through other towns, I always like to drive by the religious halls and read their marquees. Usually a scripture is quoted or paraphrased on it, but sometimes the signs have pithy sayings. Other times, however, there is a lie. Oh, I don't mean that the leaders of the denomination meant to propagate a lie. They simply spell our their doctrines instead of the word of God. Examples of these lies are, "Faith is all you need," or "God will save all that say Lord, Lord."

Not long ago, I drove by a sign that read, "A dusty Bible means an unfed believer." I pondered those words for several days and concluded the statement didn't go far enough. They conceded that one would be malnourished, but in reality a dusty Bible produces an unbeliever, for we read, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Without the word, there can be no faith. A dusty or dirty Bible can reveal a number of things.

The owner of a dusty Bible could be a hater of God. This sounds harsh to the faint-hearted, but a lover of God keeps the commandments of His word (John 14:15). People who don't diligently study, fail to keep His commandments (II Timothy 2:15). Peter admonished, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). A Bible covered in the dust of neglect betrays its owner, proclaiming his lack of love for God and God's word.

The owner of a dusty Bible can be an enemy of God. An enemy of God fights against what God seeks to accomplish on earth. The owner of a dirty Bible never studies because he has neglected God to a low priority in his life. The family becomes more important than God. Work dominates time and mind. Little League baseball and other activities squeeze God out. Personal evangelism and prayer are nonexistent in the life that surrounds the dusty Bible. In the end, his life resembles one who isn't with Christ (Matthew 12:30). This is the life of the enemy, not a friend.

A dusty Bible is a disgrace to God. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). Those refusing to study are not "approved unto God" and stand before Him in shame and disgrace. If at one time, they knew the word, obeyed it and had since fallen into the rut of not reading and studying the Bible, they are worse than when they started (II Peter 2:20).

A dusty Bible leads one to be a soldier of Satan. Satan tempts. He tries to amass an army so he can fight God. He lures people to his side by giving them excuses for not meditating on the word. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). John penned, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:10). When man falls to the Devils temptation to not grow, to not learn, to not study, he volunteers for Satan's fighting force.

A dusty Bible produces a citizen of hell. As long as one neglects his need to know the word, he is on a road to hell (Matthew 7:13-14). Unbelievers have already carved out their niche in hell (Revelation 21:8), and this includes "Christians" who demonstrate unbelief by refusing to study. The book of Revelation was written to tell the faithful that the forces of Satan will eventually be punished and destroyed. Those who don't study enlist on evil's side and will lose their souls to the fires of hell.

Just a few last thoughts. First, a dusty Bible is only a generalization. IN the first century, the Bible was in the process of being written and copied. Therefore, the faith-

**THE BIBLE IS...**

Test: \_\_\_\_\_

1. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
2. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
3. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
4. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
5. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
6. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
7. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
8. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
9. ...To the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**GOD’S PROPHET OF HOPE IN CAPTIVITY**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Daniel 2: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
2. Daniel 3: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
3. Daniel 4: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
4. Daniel 5: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
5. Daniel 6: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
6. Daniel 7: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
7. Daniel 8: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
8. Daniel 9: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
9. Daniel 10: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
10. Daniel 11: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_
11. Daniel 12: Hope in God’s \_\_\_\_\_

ful had to often meditate on the spoken Word as it was preached by inspired men. Today, there are some who, because of poor eyesight, lack of education, or other reasons, cannot read. Their task is a bit more difficult though not impossible. They can listen to others reading the Bible to them or listen to the Bible on audio cassette or some other format. It just takes a little more effort and a little more love.

Second, some Bibles are dusty because the owner has several Bibles on his shelf. Some of these are rarely used while at the same time others are worn out. Those rarely touched are covered with dust, but not because the owner never studies, but because he never studies that particular copy.

Finally, shiny new Bibles that are a couple of years old preach the same sermons that a dusty Bible does. The first Bible I ever owned had a leather cover with gold gilded edging (as most do). I used to break out the shoe polish every Saturday night and polish by Bible to get it ready for Sunday morning. That Bible looked new for several years, not because of the care I gave it, but because of the interest I didn’t give it. Why? I never studied it. The gilding never wore off; the pages never frayed; there were no marks in it. It was new. I finally began to put it to its proper use. Within a few weeks, the gold began to wear off and the textured leather became smooth. My shiny new Bible had been replaced by a well worn sword. Through the years that Bible had become part of my dormant collection. I don’t polish it anymore, nor do I use it much, but it still speaks. It tells me I have come a long way, but have a lifetime to go.

When you look at your Bible, what does it say? Does it say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” or does it beg for more attention? God took the time to write it down; we should take the time to read it!

*-Sam Dilbeck*

**HIDE-ING HIS IDENTITY**

“Now sir,” said the sidewalk interviewer, “if you found an expensive billfold on the street containing a lot of money, would you return it to its owner?”

“Yes,” answered the pedestrian, “if my name wasn’t on it.”

“Naturally,” agreed the interviewer. “What is your name, by the way?”

“Genuine Leather,” was the quick answer.

**THE BOOK OF GOD'S UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY**

The context of Daniel's prophetic book is exactly comprised of what the title suggests, God's power over all of mankind, individually and nationally. It is the source of much wisdom, but also the root of many questions. There are many topics viewed to be controversial because of the many interpretations attributed to it, but in the end it must be concluded it has but one meaning. To the child of God, the book of Daniel represents testimony of the authority and might held by the One whom he/she serves and gives them comfort in His ability to accomplish what He demands. Ultimately the book of Daniel records the actions of God that led to the fulfillment of promises He had made hundreds of years earlier, and eventually to the one promise that was to come, the sending of His Son.

Daniel is the final of the three contemporary prophets of the captivity. Already discussed has been Jeremiah and his work among God's people back in the homeland and Ezekiel's work among the captives of Judah who were already in Babylon. Daniel, along with his three youthful companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (otherwise known by their Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), was stripped from his homeland during the first carrying away in 606 B.C. along with the seed-royal of Jerusalem. His work, as evident from this book, took place solely within the court of Babylon itself, in the midst of king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel thus would be God's workman at the very source of this exile himself and would be found effective in his persuasion to these idolatrous heathen of the one true God whom he served, and whom they should serve. He was so persuasive in his work, in fact, that many ardent students of this book believe whole heartedly that Nebuchadnezzar was converted from idolatry before it was all over.

The book of Daniel begins with the siege on Jerusalem and the carrying away of the seed royal and the temple vessels. Once in Babylon, though, Nebuchadnezzar chose, "*Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them*" and they were "*to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans*" (Daniel 1:4). Of this number were Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah. In fact, so extraordinary were these young men that upon their training in the finest Babylonian schools, they rose to positions of great authority in the kingdom itself. With His servants having infiltrated the palace, God then used them throughout the rest of the book to bestow upon Nebuchadnezzar a number of signs, visions, dreams, and other proofs of His deity in order to prove to Nebuchadnezzar that it was not really him in charge, but God. From chapters 2-12, each chapter was comprised mainly of the following events:

- Daniel 2—Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image.
- Daniel 3—Nebuchadnezzar's construction of the image of gold.
- Daniel 4—Nebuchadnezzar's "uninterpretable" dreams (which Daniel interpreted).
- Daniel 5—Nebuchadnezzar sees the handwriting on the wall.
- Daniel 6—Daniel cast into the lions' den.
- Daniel 7—Daniel's vision of the four great beasts.
- Daniel 8—Daniel's vision of the ram and the he-goat.
- Daniel 9—Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks.
- Daniel 10—Daniel's vision by the River Hiddekel of a man clothed in linen.
- Daniel 11—Daniel's prophecies concerning Persia and Greece.
- Daniel 12—Daniel's words of hope, comfort, and consolation to the children of God.

Concerning Christ's appearance in Daniel, He is prominent. Time and time again He is pictured throughout the book in anticipation of His arrival. In Daniel 2, He is the great stone who crushed the kingdoms of the world. In Daniel 7, He is the Son of Man given dominion by the Ancient of Days. In Daniel 9, He is the coming Messiah and Prince. And, in Daniel 9, it is believed that the time of Christ's coming and death, and the establishment of the church is pinpointed by the division of the seventy weeks. As, then, is fully noted, Christ and His kingdom (Daniel 2) is pictured throughout Daniel and came in perfect fulfillment of it all.

The book of Daniel is a precious treasure to the historic prophecies of the church of Christ. Its truths and evidences are priceless as proof of the one vessel of salvation. Daniel's book surely does prove that God still reigns and rules in the kingdoms of men yesterday, today, and forever (Daniel 4:17). -Andy Brewer