

CLEAN BLOOD**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

The day is over; you are driving home. You tune in your radio. You hear a little blurb about a little village in India where some villagers have died suddenly, strangely, of a flu that has never been seen before. It is not influenza, but three or four fellows are dead, and it is kind of interesting.

They are sending some doctors over there to investigate it. You do not think much about it; but on Sunday, coming home from church, you hear another radio spot. Only they say it is not three villagers, it is 30,000 villagers in the back hill of this particular area of India, and it is on television that night. CNN runs a little blurb; people are heading there from the disease center in Atlanta because this disease strain has never been seen before.

By Monday morning when you get up, it is the lead story. For it is not just India; it is Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and before you know it, you are hearing this story everywhere. They have even coined a name for it now—"The Mystery Flu." The President has made some comments that he and everyone are praying and hoping that all will go well over there. But everyone is wondering, "How are we going to contain it?" That is when the President of France makes an announcement that shocks Europe. He is closing their borders. No flights can land from India, Pakistan, or any of the countries where this thing has been seen.

That night you are watching a little bit of CNN before going to bed. Your jaw hits your chest when a weeping woman is translated from a French news program into English. There is a man lying in a hospital in Paris dying of "the Mystery Flu." "It has come to Europe." Panic strikes. As best they can tell, once you get it, you have it for a week, and you do not know it. Then you have four days of unbelievable symptoms. Then you die.

Britain closes its borders, but it is too late. Southampton, Liverpool, Northampton, and it is Tuesday morning when the President of the United States makes the following announcement: "Due to a National Security Risk, all flights to and from Europe and Asia have been cancelled. If your loved ones are overseas, I'm sorry; they cannot come back until we find a cure for this ting." Within four days our nation has been plunged into an unbelievable fear. People are selling little masks for you face. People are talking about what it is come to this country, and preachers on Tuesday are saying, "It's the scourge of God."

It is Wednesday night, and you are at Bible study when somebody runs in from the parking lot and says, "Turn on a radio! Turn on a radio!" While the church listens to a transistor radio with a microphone stuck up to it, the announcement is made: "Two women are lying in a Long Island hospital dying from the Mystery Flue." Within hours, it seems, this thing just sweeps across the country. People are working around the clock trying to find an antidote. Nothing is working. California, Oregon, Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts. It is as though it is just sweeping in from the borders.

Then, all of a sudden the news comes out. The code has been broken. A cure can be found. A vaccine can be made. It is going to take the blood of somebody who has not been infected, and so, sure enough, all through the Midwest, through all those channels of emergency broadcasting, everyone is asked to do one simple thing: "Go to your downtown hospital, and have your blood type taken. That's all we ask of you. When you hear the sirens go off in your neighborhood, please make your way quickly, quietly, and safely to the hospitals."

Sure enough, when you and your family get down there late on that Friday night, there is a long line, and they have got nurses and doctors coming out and pricking fingers and taking blood and putting labels on it. Your wife and your kids are out there, and they take you blood type and say, "Wait here in the parking lot and if we call your name, you can be dismissed and go home." You stand around scared with your neighbors, wondering what in the world is going on and if this is the end of the world.

Suddenly a young man comes running out of the hospital screaming. He is yelling a name and waving a clipboard. What? He yells it again! And your son tugs at your jacket

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

PREACHING CHRIST IS...

Text: _____

I. Preaching About the _____

Notes:

II. Preaching About _____

Notes:

III. Preaching About _____

Notes:

WE FIND THE PEOPLE GUILTY

Text: _____

I. The _____ are Summoned to Hear

Notes:

II. The _____ are Summoned to Hear

Notes:

III. The _____ are Summoned to Hear

Notes:

MORE WEIGHT

The branch that bears the most fruit bows lowest to the ground while the branch with little or no fruit stands most upright. So it is with humility and conceit. Humility carries with it the weight of wisdom while conceit has the light-headedness of pride.

and says, "Daddy, that's me." Before you know it, they have grabbed your boy. "Wait a minute, hold it!" And they say, "It's okay; his blood is clean. His blood is pure. We want to make sure he doesn't have the disease. We think he has got the right type." Five tense minutes later out come the doctors and nurses, crying and hugging one another—some are even laughing. It is the first time you have seen anybody laugh in a week, and an old doctor walks up to you and says, "Thank you sir. Your son's blood type is perfect. It's clean, it is pure, and we can make the vaccine."

As the word begins to spread all across that parking lot full of folks, people are screaming and praying and laughing and crying. But then the gray-haired doctor pulls you and your wife aside and says, "May we see you for a moment? We didn't realize the donor would be a minor, and we need...we need you to sign a consent form." You begin to sign and then you see that the number of pints of blood to be taken is empty. "H-h-h-how many pints?" And that is when the old doctor's smile fades, and he says, "We had not idea it would be a little child. We weren't prepared. We need it all!" "But, but..." "You don't understand. We are talking about the world here. Please sign. We—we need it all—we need it all!" "But can't you give him a blood transfusion?" "If we had clean blood, we would. Can you sign?" In numb silence you do. Then they say, "Would you like to have a moment with him before we begin?"

Can you walk back? Can you walk back to that room where he sits on a table saying, "Daddy? Mommy? What's going on?" Can you take his hand and say, "Son, your mommy and I love you, and we would never ever let anything happen to you that didn't just have to be. Do you understand that?" And then that old doctor comes back in and says, "I'm sorry, we've—we've got to get started. People are all over the world are dying." Can you leave? Can you walk out while he is saying, "Dad? Mom? Why—why have you forsaken me?"

And then next week, when they have the ceremony to honor your son, some folks sleep through it, some folks do not come because it is their day to go to the lake, and some folks come with a plastic smile, just pretending to care. Would you want to jump up and say: "My son died! Don't you care?" Is that what God is saying? "My son died. Don't you know how much I care?"

"Father, seeing it from your eyes breaks our hearts. Maybe now we can begin to comprehend the great love you have for us. In Jesus' name. Amen." (John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-8; Isaiah 53; Hebrews 5:9-10; Luke 6:46; I John 2:3-5; 3:18; 5:2-3).

-Gary Summers

THE BOOK OF THE HUMBLE COUNTRYMAN

A brief glimpse through the backgrounds of each of the prophets quickly concludes that each prophet was unique and there was no standard as to nationality, lifestyle, or occupation that could define them all. There have been royalty and farmers, and city men to hayseeds. Some were forward and confrontational, while others tended to make their point more indirectly. The prophet Micah was from the town of Moresheth Gath (Micah 1:1,14). This was a town some twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem and was a very productive agricultural hub. His upbringing made him unaware of the political ongoings up in Jerusalem, but all around him he could see his brethren suffering and this concerned him very much.

Micah identifies the time in which he preached as being in the days of “*Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem*” (Micah 1:1b). This would mark his period of prophecy around 735 to 710 B.C., making him a contemporary of both Hosea and Isaiah. These days were plagued by iniquitous practices within both Israel and Judah. There had been a great deal of prosperity to bless Judah just prior to Micah’s work, but even though the political policies brought wealth, they did not remove the sacrilegious high places. The result of this was ongoing idolatry and rebellion against God. Israel, on the other hand, was crumbling all together. Their inward struggles led them to seek foreign alliances, the most prominent of which was with Assyria; and their continued rejection of God for the idols caused God to target them with His wrath. Micah tried to warn them in the years leading up to their fall:

“And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment? Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. They shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings” (Micah 3:1-4).

Their rejection, though, of these words of caution resulted in Assyria’s conquer of Israel in 721 B.C.

Judah on the other hand, seeing the sin and consequence of their brethren to the north, refused to notice the warning. Surely they thought that their prosperity indicated that all was well and there was no need to turn back unto the Lord. Like to Israel, Micah warned Judah of what would come:

“Now why dost thou cry out aloud? Is there no king in thee? Is thy counsellor perished? For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies” (Micah 4:9-10)

This warning must have seemed farfetched to Judah because at the time Micah prophesied this, Babylon was still under Assyrian control. They simply could not conceive that in the future Babylon would win back its independence and overcome them. They were warned, but simply refused to listen.

Not all was bad news though, because wherein Micah warned the people of their sins and told them of their punishments, he also gave them liberty to which they could look forward. Upon their repentance a remnant would be restored to the homeland. But through that restoration, then would the promise of redemption be fulfilled. Micah 4:1-2 is identical to Isaiah 2:2-3 of the prophecy of the everlasting kingdom (church) that would be established in Jerusalem and through which redemption would be made possible.

Christ is pictured in Micah in a marvelous way. Some critics of Messianic prophecy say that anybody could have read the prophecies and fulfilled them somehow in life proving themselves to be the Messiah. But how could one control where they would be born? Micah prophesies of the coming Savior that, “*...thou, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*” (Micah 5:2). The Christ would come, being born in Bethlehem, and through Him redemption would be made know.

Micah’s heartfelt concern for his brethren is a touching example of the reaction everybody should have toward sin. God had a controversy with His people, but above all God cared for His people, and through Micah’s book, that affection shines through.

-Andy Brewer