

THE BED IS TOO SHORT AND THE COVER IS TOO NARROW

*“Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. **For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it**” (Isaiah 28:14-20).*

Israel had departed from God and was comfortable in her sins. God sent a warning by the prophet Isaiah to warn Israel relative to their sinful condition. They had made a “covenant with death” that the destruction that was coming would not affect them. God, however, had “disannulled” their covenant. Relative to their condition. God said, *“For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it”* (Isaiah 28:20).

The bed was too short and the cover was too narrow! Have you ever tried to sleep on a bed that was so short you could not stretch yourself upon it? Have you ever tried to cover yourself with covering that was too narrow? Now, have you ever had both of these conditions at the same time? It would be a cramped and cold situation! Judgment was coming upon Israel. Within a few decades of Isaiah’s prophecy, Assyria came against Israel and took them into captivity.

There is another judgment day coming. This is the final judgment in which all the nations will be gathered together before the judgment seat of Christ. *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory”* (Matthew 25:31) *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (II Corinthians 5:10). Many will realize their bed is too short and their cover is too narrow. Who are some of these?

Those That Do Not Believe In Christ

Atheists do not believe in God and consequently do not believe Christ is God. God had the Psalmist to write; *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good”* (Psalm 14:1).

Many of the Jews, though they believed in God, did not believe in Christ. John wrote; *“He came into his own, and his own received him not”* (John 1:11). In fact, they had Christ crucified. But Jesus Christ rose from the death and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God! Their bed is too short and their cover is too narrow.

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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)

THE FATHER OF ALL

Text: _____

I. The Father of _____

Notes:

II. The Father of _____

Notes:

III. The Father of _____

Notes:

IV. The Father of _____

Notes:

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

Text: _____

I. Their Ways Were _____

Notes:

II. Their Ways Were _____

Notes:

III. Their Ways Were _____

Notes:

Many are the preachers who tell people believe in Christ and accept Him into their hearts and they will be saved. While the Bible does tell us that faith is essential to salvation, it is not the only condition for the remission of sins. Jesus tells us that we must also “repent.” He said, *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). One must confess Christ, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raise him from the death, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:9-10). And, one must “be baptized” in order to be saved. The Bible records, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38). Jesus says; *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). Those that have not obeyed what the Lord has said will find that their bed is too short and their cover is too narrow.

Nominal Christians

“Nominal Christians” are those who are Christian in name only. Such “serve” Christ when it is convenient for them. These have no true convictions or dedication relative to serving God. They attend worship services when they want to instead out of deep devotion to God. They live lives that make them a “good –ole Joe,” but not a faithful child of God. Such people need to be converted. Following Jesus requires surrender: *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24). Every branch in Christ that doesn’t bear fruit will be cut off, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (John 15:1-2). Nominal Christians will find that their bed is too short and their cover is too narrow.

Let’s make sure that our bed is made according to God’s specifications. Then, and only then, can we lie down in peace and sleep. *“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety”* (Psalm 4:8).

-Billy Bland

THE BOOK OF RECONSTRUCTED HOPE

Haggai is the second shortest book in all of the Old Testament, second only to Obadiah; but contained in its two chapters is a marvelous lesson of renewal, recharge, and rededication to a cause formerly forgotten. Unlike any of the minor prophets up to this point, Haggai's work was post-exilic, meaning he worked and wrote following the Babylonian exile after the Jews were charged by Cyrus to return to their homeland. This fact places him as a contemporary with the works of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as the work of the final two prophets, Zechariah and Malachi. The problem with which Haggai is made to deal is the same as Ezra found upon his return, namely that the temple's construction had been neglected for the sake of rebuilding everything else. The attitude of the people is revealed in Haggai 1:2, when the Lord demonstrates the people's indifference to Haggai by saying, "*This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.*" Its not as though they overlooked the fact that the temple compound was laid waste and needed to be a priority in their rebuilding efforts, but rather they simply decided that it could wait while they tended to their own social needs. For this disease of the heart, God sent Haggai unto them.

The prophet Haggai was the first to prophesy in Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity. He was likely born in Babylon, having never personally seen the homeland until his return in 520 B.C. It is known that this was the time in which he came back to Jerusalem because in Ezra 4:24-5:1, these events are mentioned: "*Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.*" Haggai and Zechariah both went to Jerusalem at the command of Darius to encourage the people to rebuild the temple, and it is said that it happened in the second year of Darius' reign. Knowing that Darius' reign began in 521 B.C., that concludes Haggai and Zechariah's work being in 520 B.C. The importance of knowing this date is the fact that the first group of Jews had returned to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. at Cyrus' order. They had not just neglected the rebuilding of the temple for a few weeks or months, but rather sixteen years! Haggai and Zechariah both had their work cut out for them in getting through to these people.

God's dissatisfaction with His people is illustrated by his reproof of them: "*Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it unto a bad with holes*" (Haggai 1:3-6). For sixteen years the people rebuilt their houses, they sealed their houses to comfort themselves, and yet the house of the Lord still laid desolate. God tells them twice in this book, once in verse five, to consider their ways. What were their intentions and what were their motives? Was comfort all they sought, or were they also concerned with their God? By the prophesying of Haggai the people were motivated to continue work on the temple and completed it in just a short time. But still in the minds of many there was a problem.

Among those returned captives were the very elderly who had lived in Jerusalem before the exile and remembered the glory of Solomon's temple. It was remembered for its beauty, splendor, and extravagance. Now viewing this meager effort, by comparison it was as though it were nothing (Haggai 2:3). However, through the remainder of the book, God through Haggai, eases their minds by reminding them that the glory of even Solomon's temple is nothing compared to the glory of the latter temple that God Himself would build. That latter temple is the church wherein man contacts Christ and lives in hope of the eternal morrow. Surely there is no physical beauty that can compare. In fact it is the mention of this latter temple that portrays Christ in the book. In Haggai 2:9, the Lord said, "*The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.*" The temple itself would be enlarged by Herod in later years and would eventually rival the glory of Solomon's temple, but the greatest glory is found in the current temple of God, the church purchased by Christ's greatest possession, His blood.

Haggai faced a seemingly, insurmountable foe in dealing with the indifferent Jews, but through perseverance convicted them of the need to rise up and serve God. The foe faced today in the world feels insurmountable, but if we too shall persevere, then great service will be rendered unto God by all whom we contact. -Andy Brewer