

Addressing the Malaise of the Church

“For it is Time to begin with the household of God” - I Peter 4:7a

Eph. 4:11-12a - *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service...”*. Teachers have a responsibility *“to equip the saints for the work of service”* and the saints have a right to demand of their teachers that they fulfill their responsibility to equip.

Let me begin by stating that as an American, I do not believe it is my place to address the condition of the Church outside of the country in which I live. That should be left to those who actually live there and know of what they speak. And, I concede that it certainly can be argued that it is not my place to do so as it relates to the Church in my own country. I do not presume to be an “Elijah,” except that I, too, am *“a man of like passions.”* But, to be privileged to be joined to a “Corporate Elijah,” with that I shall be well content.

The word, *malaise*, is an interesting term with a variety of definitions, and out of that variety, this is the definition I chose as being the most succinct and relevant to the theme of this message: *malaise - a problem or condition that harms or weakens a group.* A.W. Tozer had this to say, about the Church’s foremost responsibility:

“The popular notion that the first obligation of the Church is to spread the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth is false. Her first obligation is to be spiritually worthy to spread it... To spread an ineffective, degenerate brand of Christianity to pagan lands is not to fulfill the commandment of Christ or to discharge our obligation to the heathen.”

I believe the word to the American Church in this hour could be summed up in the scripture, *“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God”*---a judgment that must first begin, individually. And, since we know, or should know from Scripture, that the unsaved Jew will be unprepared for what is looming on the horizon and referred to in Scripture as *“The Time of Jacob’s Trouble,”* it is incumbent upon the Church to be prepared, not only theologically, but in true spiritual maturity, and not only for her own sake, but for the sake of the Jew, and ultimately, for the sake of God’s Testimony to His faithfulness to the Everlasting Covenant in accordance with His eternal purposes.

This morning, at this very moment, tens of thousands of churches throughout this country are having their Sunday morning services. Not all, but many, are making declarations as to how “anointed” their church service is, and anything and everything which comprises it. Personally, I find such boasting, not as much an anointing, as it is, annoying. If these manifestations are real and evident, if God is truly in our midst, why then do we need to be told, or rather, sold on the idea? Did Jacob need to be convinced? Did Moses? Did Isaiah? Did Daniel? Did John? Did Paul? Did the believers on the Day of Pentecost?

But, even aside from that, regardless of whether the anointing be genuine or contrived, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“Your boasting is not good. For what do you have that you did not receive, and if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”*

You would almost think that what John the Baptist actually said was, *"I must increase, but He must decrease."* And, just as Israel must come to the end of herself, so too, must the Church.

The thought often comes to mind, just how many of these churches being allegedly filled to the brim with God's anointing are considering the issues which are being discussed in our humble little gathering and in the way in which they are being discussed? How often are these issues considered? Are they even considered at all?

Part of it relates to the issue of a suitable wineskin and the corporate delivery system, which will be required of the Church in the last days. But, even putting aside the timing of specific events pertaining to the 70th Week of Daniel, the Church needs to return to the way God originally intended her to function, so that she will be able to "hit the floor running" because of the way she has been functioning all along.

How can we hold on to the same Post-Reformational practices and mindset, continue to have our "business as usual" Sunday morning services --- same place, same time, dependent on the professional clergy to tell us what to do and how and when to do it, in ever-expanding facilities, the marketing of name, products and services, with church steeples topped off with the obligatory cross? All this collectively cries out, "Here we are! Come and get us!"---a sort of convenient "one stop shopping" for persecutors of the faith.

For those who choose to continue in this fashion, they will be made to order, "sitting ducks!" having been oblivious to the times and the lessons of history. For the vast majority of the Church, who have yet to transition over to the character and function of God's original design, the preferable time to begin that transition is NOW, and not wait until the 70th Week of Daniel begins.

And, a part of that transition is decentralizing our religious hierarchy, while we invest in relational networks, pooling both our material and spiritual resources, considering how scarce and precious those resources are within a relatively small representation of the American Church--- investing in the present that we might reap the dividends required of the Church, both in that present and critical future.

The fact that we have to transition at all is an indictment upon the Church. But, a more in-depth discussion on this issue is perhaps for another time. And, that is why we desperately need a restoration of the Church, *"the faith (and practice) that was once for all delivered to the saints,"* not only in preparation for the 70th Week of Daniel, but because that is how God intended her to function, regardless of who that final generation happens to be.

One significant obstacle to this necessary transition and restoration is the principle found in this statement by Jesus in Luke 5:36-39 - *"And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins*

*and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. **And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good enough.'***"

Many of us tend to focus on the part about the wineskin, referring to the same recorded statement in Matt. 5, but there is a critical addition found in Luke 5. And so, in this case, I want to focus on the last sentence of this passage, which reveals the root cause of such reluctance to make the necessary and scriptural change. ***"And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good enough.'"***

In other words, because the Institutional Church has become so accustomed to the "old wine," and are so drunk from having consumed it for so long, their senses are dulled to the point that the quality of wine is no longer a consideration. Why? Because, they no longer can discern the difference. In their drunken stupor, it just doesn't matter anymore what the quality of that wine is. They are simply content with any old wine, and there is no doubt as to just how freely that "other wine" is allowed to flow these days. Much of the Church is so punch-drunk, that she no longer can tell when she is being hit or what it is that she is being hit with.

If you want to know what the future will look like for the church in America, as one example, look to present-day China. While they have their millions in "State Approved" Institutional Churches, they have their tens of millions in unauthorized house churches, of whom countless Christians have to endure the consequences of their faith. But, I make it a habit to issue a word of caution with respect to house churches, especially, in those early, critical stages. It is anything but the panacea some expect it to be. Much like new businesses, it is likely that 80% do not survive their first year.

Frankly, in recent years I have become almost as concerned with the "House Church Movement" as I have with the Institutional Church. There is this prevalent belief, and misconception, that simply moving meetings from a formal sanctuary into a living room is somehow "a cure all to end all." And, along the way, we have accumulated a host of "How To" books within this "Movement" in the manner of many of the other "popular" movements." A movement pops up, becomes in vogue, and writers and readers, alike, jump on the bandwagon.

Of course, not everyone has been immersed in the House Church concept, expose's on what's wrong with the Institutional Church, the historical roots of its many practices, the New Testament pattern of church, and so forth and so on. No doubt, these are all valid factors in our overall understanding of where we are and how we got here, along with the technical correctness of how church was designed to be set up and function.

For myself, it can rightfully be said that Church History has played no insignificant role in formulating my convictions, next to Scripture and personal experience. Furthermore, I am convinced that meeting in homes and other informal venues provides for the greatest possibility for the preeminence of Christ and Body life as it was originally intended to be.

That said, it is also true that it is far easier to take the people out of the church than to take the church out of the people. It is far easier to fill a vacuum than to have to de-program and re-program people who, for the most part, bring their personal baggage along with them, requiring a sort of "decompression chamber" within the process of spiritual restoration in order to establish spiritual health and go on to maturity.

But, also, there is no more vulnerable place for believers and a more fertile environment for error and abuse than within such an informal and ostensibly unstructured venue as "outside the camp." This is where "leaders" who have been prepared by the Lord outside of the Institutional Church framework and mindset will be needed and called upon to minister to such as these --- not to dominate or "*lord it over the flock,*" but to disciple and equip in such a way that they literally work themselves out of a job. Because, when they don't, they will inevitably replace the Chief Cornerstone.

With freedom comes increased risk and greater responsibility. I would submit that despite, or in addition to, the most technically correct New Testament approach to "doing church," what ultimately distinguished the Early Church was that it was led and influenced by men who knew Christ, intimately, and who were able to impart that knowledge in spirit and truth. They imparted more than mere teachings, but could impart the very Life of the Lord **through** their lives.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*Though you might have many teachers in Christ, yet, you would not have many fathers. For, in Christ, I became your father through the gospel.*" When I was a younger man, my question was, "Where are the fathers? These days, I am asking, "Where are the sons?" An integral part of "*redeeming the time*" is taking advantage of the "*treasures hidden in earthen vessels*" while they are yet with us, not merely as theological resources, but as true elders in the Lord.

Another concern is with what goes for much of the prophetic teaching ministry and its potentially serious consequences down the road, of the growing and seemingly insatiable itch to be prognosticators rather than expounders of what we should already know based upon what is literally written in the prophetic Scriptures. It's called, "speculation." Yes! Quite naturally, it is reasonable to delve into a certain amount of speculation. It just comes with the territory as there are many details yet to be revealed.

But, if we are familiar enough with the signs as we ought, as was intended for us to be, I am reasonably confident that we will recognize things as they occur or are about to occur, "*for the day will reveal it.*" However, making baseless predictions beyond what the Scripture clearly reveals is not much different than soothsaying. But, it sure has proven to be profitable. After all, it sells! And, so the concern is not with speculation per se², so much as it is to the degree to which we invest in, and are captivated by, this speculation.

Moreover, it is my conviction that until some of us can get past our obsessions with old standby's such as the Roman Catholic Church being the "Great Harlot," America being the modern-day "Babylon the Great," and the "Four Blood Moons," we will never be able to make full use of the prophetic scriptures as God intended. Instead of being enlightened,

we will only be distracted by this form of fleshly fascination and mystical idolatry.

Sadly, I know that the vast majority of those who attend prophetic conferences take all this eschatological information in, having taken copious notes, return home, and it's business as usual with how they, and their local churches, continue to function. "But, hey! The fellowship and food was great, the teaching, fascinating, and the speakers, so knowledgeable and articulate! We were really blessed and thoroughly enjoyed, ourselves! What more could you want?" Well, maybe we should be asking the question, "What more could God want?"

But, not only is the teacher entrusted with a stewardship, but so too, is the listener. While teachers "*incur the stricter judgment,*" the listener is held accountable for the teaching they hear. Now, in no way does that imply that every word should be swallowed, hook, line and sinker coming from any teacher. On the contrary, more than ever we all need to use such opportunities as an occasion to sharpen our discernment and become adept at "*extracting the precious from the worthless,*" sorely lacking in the Church these days.

However, if we are going to volunteer such comments as, "That message really struck a chord with me!" or "That teaching really expanded and deepened my understanding!," then what follows should be, "So what am I going to do about it?" The scriptural phrase, "*Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run,*" has been invoked countless times. We can record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, and read what is transmitted as if these endeavors were ends in themselves. But, we must not lose sight of the purpose, so we "*may run.*" And, I believe it is time to "*run.*"

A.W. Tozer had this surprising comment to say about prayer and revival:

"Have you noticed how much praying has been going on for revival of late---and how little revival has resulted? Considering the volume of prayer that is ascending these days, rivers of revival should be flowing in blessing throughout the land. That no such results are in evidence should not discourage us; rather it should stir us to find out why our prayers are not being answered. Everything has its proper cause in the Kingdom of God as well as in the natural world. The reason for God's obvious refusal to send revival may lie deep, but surely not too deep to discover. I believe our problem is that we have been trying to substitute praying for obeying; and it simply will not work."

The classic process of inquiry is as follows: Who? What? Where? When? and, Why? And, it is this glaring and consistent omission of the Why?, within the Post-Tribulation view, which is often just as deficient, or guilty, as that of the Pre-Tribulation view. This is the general case, and continues to be the general case, with nearly every teaching, book, conference, website, blog and Facebook page devoted to end-time prophecy.

You can address the Who? What? Where? and When? as your typical prophetic ministries and conferences do---and, for the record, I do not consider this conference to be among them---But, the vast majority get it wrong as they do not see the big picture from God's perspective. It is the Why? which allows us to see the big picture from God's perspective, or, in other words, God's Eternal Purpose.

It is the “Why?” that reveals the perspective and meaning of God’s ultimate intention. It is the glue that holds everything together and the foundation upon which all else is built. Without the “Why?,” we are left with little more than academic exercises, fascinating presentations, interesting writings, dynamic dialog, and the stuff of Bible trivia games.

Now, please do not misunderstand, the four strands comprising the “Who? What? Where? and When?” are critical to understanding the fullness of the prophetic word. But, it is the “Why?” which ties these four strands together into a single knot, the knot which represents “*the whole counsel of God*” concerning His eternal purpose.

Therefore, the Church needs to know why she was originally called in the first place, for how else can she provoke Israel to the sort of jealousy Paul speaks of in Romans 11? Moreover, she not only needs to “*understand the times and know what she is to do,*” but be capable of putting into action what those times will demand of her. In that context, “*equipping the saints for the work of service*” takes on a more far-reaching meaning and application.

Once again, I draw from that deep well of A.W. Tozer, truly a prophetic voice in his own time, who offered this observation of the modern-day church, “*A generation of Christians reared among push buttons and automatic machines is impatient of slower and less direct methods of reaching their goals. We have been trying to apply machine-age methods to our relations with God. We read our chapter, have our short devotions, and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy by attending another gospel meeting or listening to another thrilling story told by a religious adventurer lately returned from afar.*”

The tragic results of this spirit are all about us. Shallow lives, following religious philosophies, the preponderance of the element of fun in gospel meetings, the glorification of men, trust in religious externalities, quasi-religious fellowships, salesmanship methods, the mistaking of dynamic personality for the power of the Spirit; these and such as these are the symptoms of an evil disease, a deep and serious malady of the soul.”

Rev. 3:17-18 - (church in Laodicea) “*Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you **do not know (or do not want to know)** that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes **so that you may see.**”*

Just as “*not all Israel is Israel,*” neither is all the church, the Church. Just as only a remnant of Israel is to remain and be redeemed, so too, as a result of the prophesied, “*Great falling away,*” will a commensurate remnant of the Church remain at the end of the age. As Paul wrote to the Gentile believers, “*Do not be conceited, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.*”

Is. 58:12 - *“Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell.”*

But, how do we determine and define what needs to be restored? I believe that T. Austin-Sparks reveals a most fundamental principle in gaining a right perspective in answer to this question, when he states, *“God's end is always present in His beginnings.”*

Jer. 1:10 - *“See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”* This is the purpose and the functional scenario of a true prophet of God. Notice, there is a three-step process: (1) *“to pluck up and to break down (2) to destroy and to overthrow (3) to build and to plant.”* It cannot be 1 out of 3 or even 2 out of 3. It must be 3 out of 3.

Now, someone will understandably cite I Cor. 14:3, *“But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”* Yes! Exhortation can, and quite often, contains words of reproof, warnings and timely instruction. But, that is a prophetic utterance, and not necessarily that of a prophet, nor the all-consuming function or weight of a prophet.

He is not merely gifted in the occasional exhibiting of a prophetic word, but rather, he is the prophetic word. The man and the message are one and the same. The man is the message. His whole life is the message, which has been birthed, hammered and chiseled over time within every fiber of his being by God., and yet, all too aware of his own imperfections.

The true prophet of God may very well engage in *“plucking up and breaking down,”* and *“destroying and overthrowing,”* but only as a necessary means to an end---the means by which the ultimate objective, can be reached, *“to build and to plant.”* It is a process that is all too often misunderstood by leadership. Insecure leaders will quite often put a halt to this three-step process, having felt threatened by steps one and/or two, and never allowing that third and final step to ever take place. This is not the sort of shepherding the Scriptures speak of. And, who loses the most? It is always the sheep.

One of the major flaws in the teaching of Christian Theology is what I believe to be the error of compartmentalization of Bible teaching. I once referred to this notion in an essay, entitled, *“The Problem of Topical Christianity,”* as though each topic takes on a life of its own, separate and isolated, from the *“WHOLE counsel of God.”* Paul declared that he *“did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God,”* not simply as it pertained to the presentation of a pure gospel, but also, for the purposes of understanding the *“Big Picture”* of God's eternal purposes.

This is inclusive of *“The Mystery of Israel”* and *“The Mystery of Christ.”* You simply cannot fully understand the one apart from the other anymore than the principle expressed at the end of Hebrews 11. In making reference to the saints, from Old

Testament to New Testament times, the author states, *"that apart from us, they should not be made perfect."*

Let me repeat, they are not to be studied and understood separately in isolation, but as part and parcel of the same mystery---*"The Mystery of God"* discovered within His eternal purposes. And, therefore, you cannot separate the *"Mystery of Israel"* from *"The Mystery of Christ"* anymore than you can separate the Old Testament from the New Testament. As far as I'm concerned, it's one, unfolding Testament, or more accurately, a continuing unfolding revelation.

At one time or another, most of us have heard the statement, "Well, I don't get into doctrine." It may have the sound of spirituality about it, but it is a pseudo-spirituality. In fact, this rather "nice" sounding attitude flies in the face of Scripture. This is not the sort of peace and unity about which the Scripture speaks. And, frankly, it smacks of ecumenicalism, which produces a false peace and unity because it is not upheld by the Spirit of Truth.

Going to a concordance and doing a word search and foraging for any and all verses that happen to match the specific criteria in question is not necessarily handling or knowing the Word of God, accurately. Satan knows the Scripture better than any of us, but it is all filtered through the perverted spirit of, *"Has God said?"* Knowing words of God can be a far cry from knowing the Word of God. *"Even the demons believe and tremble."*

What is theology? It is the study of the nature of God. But, the Bible was never intended to be studied and applied as merely an academic textbook --- the memorization of facts and figures and the arbitrary extraction of snippets from the whole of Scripture. It is the literal door through which we have the freedom and responsibility to gain access to the Heart and Mind of God as the Holy Spirit grants us light and life through that Word.

There is such a thing as text, context, concepts, principles, and common threads in light of the weight of Scripture. In nearly all instances, when God uses symbolism, metaphors and allegories, He comes right out and tells you. *"Speaking that which the Lord has not spoken"* is treading on dangerous ground, not because of a difference in genuine Scriptural interpretation, but as a reflection of the heart resulting in a misrepresentation of the gospel and a mischaracterization of God, Himself.

Simply knowing large amounts of Scripture is no guarantee for knowing the Word of God, or *"handling accurately the word of truth."* The Scripture has been made cheap in our day by its abuse and misuse perpetrated by a glut of teachers and teachings as varied as might be found on any particular day on Mars Hill.

There are two fundamental approaches to Biblical understanding, which are in conflict with one another; *exegesis* and *eisegesis*. In the simplest of definitions, *exegesis* means exposition or explanation. Good Biblical *exegesis* involves the examination of a particular text of Scripture in order to properly interpret it based upon a careful, objective analysis. *Exegesis* literally means "to lead out of." That means that the interpreter is led

to his conclusions by following the text.

The opposite approach to Scripture is eisegesis, which is the interpretation of a scripture based upon subjective, non-analytical reading. The word eisegesis literally means “to lead into,” which means the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever he wants.

In the classic work, "Through the Looking Glass," the sequel to Louis Carol's "Alice in Wonderland," *Humpty Dumpty said to Alice, "There's glory for you." "I don't know what you mean by glory," Alice replied. "Of course you don't till I tell you." "When I use a word, said Humpty, it means just what I choose it to mean—nothing more nor less." Alice replies and says, "How can you make words mean so many different things?"*

But, Peter tells us that *"no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation."* And, there is the famous quote, *"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it."* For those who may not know, it was, Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda for Adolph Hitler, who made that statement.

We are exhorted to *"speak the truth in love,"* meaning, you should not have one without the other. But, nowhere does the Scripture teach the notion of unity at any cost. As one man has said, *"It is better to be divided by truth than united in error."* Paul wrote, *"For there must also be factions among you so that those who are approved of God may become evident."* Yes! Jesus did pray, *"Let them be one as We are One."*

But, when placing equal weight on those last four words, *"as We are One,"* the meaning of the phrase becomes far more than a wonderful thing to do, having people sitting in a circle, holding hands and singing, "We are one in the spirit." It is the often overlooked last four words of this phrase that gives the greater meaning to the first four words, *"Let them be one"-----How?-----"as we are one"* - as the Father and the Son are one. The smallest of words like "as" and seemingly less important little phrases can often provide a subtle, yet, significant truth not apparent to the rapid reader.

As in this case, if we focus, on those first four words, we miss the full meaning of this prayer, and we are left with nothing but a humanistic, ecumenical understanding. But, as a general principle applied to the Word of God, it is important to read words, all words, with equal importance, so that we might acquire a more clear and accurate understanding of God's thought to us.

Ultimately, it will be *"the people who know their God (as He truly is, and not who they wish Him to be), who will be strong and do exploits,"* and who will be able to *"give insight to the many"---not only through eschatological knowledge, but in the revelation of the Person of Christ, Himself, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, *"There is no foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Christ Jesus."* End-time prophetic knowledge can and must be built upon this foundation, and should never supplant nor be a mere supplement to it. This is the

great trap that teachers of eschatology and those with an excessive appetite and fascination for the prophetic, often fall into. We must guard against it! We must continuously, *“Pay close attention to ourselves and to our teaching.”*

These days, in particular, there is a strong and irreverent tendency for those who would presume to speak for God to be far too glib in taking license with *“the holy things in His Temple.”* It would serve us well to maintain a healthy fear and trembling to avoid, at all cost, the presumptuous sin of *“speaking that which the Lord has not spoken.”*

The Church is being literally bombarded with all manner of so-called “prophetic words,” giving the impression that *“Our God is (indeed) a god of confusion.”* If we really took seriously God’s warning and punishment for *“speaking that which the Lord has not spoken”* and presuming to take license with our pretentious, *“Thus sayeth the Lords,”* it is quite likely that this particular malady would be significantly diminished.

Jer. 24:16-17 - *Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. they are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord. “They keep saying to those who despise Me, ‘The Lord has said, “You will have peace”’; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, ‘Calamity will not come upon you.’”*

For me, what comes to mind is the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine and the premature declaration of Israel’s Final Return and accompanying blessings. It also brings to mind the pervasive attitude of German Jews in the 1930’s, who had become the most secularized and assimilated Jews in Europe. Despite the general effort to publicly diminish or completely forsake their Jewish identity, the Nazi authorities would not allow it. As much as those Jews endeavored to bury their ethnic identity, ultimately, they could not escape it.

Why? Prior to the Nazi-driven Holocaust, Jews were, historically, either persecuted or martyred for their identification with the Jewish religion and culture or spared from such a fate through religious conversion or total assimilation into the dominant national culture. What set this Holocaust apart was not only in its magnitude, but in the criteria used in defining, “Who is a Jew?” Conversion and assimilation would no longer spare you. Having Jewish blood was all that mattered.

And, I have no reason to believe that it will be any different for the Jewish believer than for the Jewish unbeliever, except, that as a Jewish believer in Messiah, he will be in peril of being in double jeopardy, singled out for persecution, if not martyrdom, as a Christian and a Jew. “Pick your poison!” In light of what has been said, it would do well for every generation of believers to take to heart Mordecai’s admonition to Esther, *“Do not imagine that you in the king’s palace can escape any more than all the Jews.”*

The current wave of “*ear tickling*” doctrine and false moves and manifestations attributed to the Holy Spirit, especially popular in Charismatic circles is anything but reassuring. Jesus said, *“An evil and adulterous generation craves after a sign.”* *Sound familiar?*

Believing is one thing, expectation, possibly another, but it's the **craving** that, if not repented of, will ultimately lead to the shipwreck of our faith. We must recognize that the craving for spiritual manifestations can be just as carnal, deceptive, idolatrous and deadly as those attitudes and deeds more readily identified as sin.

This will prove to be an ideal recipe and set-up for the Great Deception, served on a silver platter, made to order for the coming Antichrist, his False Prophet, and other false prophets and messiah's along the way. Could this represent that which will significantly contribute to the "*Great Falling Away*" in the "last days?" I believe it will. It will set up to be "the perfect storm."

II Thes. 2:8-10 - "*Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and **signs and false wonders**, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.*"

Familiarity with eschatology is not merely a peripheral option, a nice idea, or something to take up as a hobby. Since, preparation and the prophetic word go hand-in-hand, it is worth noting that approximately 27% of the Bible deals with some aspect of prophecy. In light of such a fact, I must conclude that willful neglect of that amount of God's word, the revelation of God's Mind, plans and eternal purposes, is done, not only at our own peril, but the peril of others, by shirking our responsibility as those called to be "*forerunners.*"

Many of us, somewhere along the way, have heard the pseudo-spiritual statement, "When it comes to end-time prophecy, I'm basically a Panthologist. However things pan out is fine with me," with this statement often concluded with a silly chuckle. But, this is no laughing matter! On the surface, it may sound innocuous, but there is one glaring problem with this attitude. It's simply not Biblical. And, those who literally "enjoy" such an attitude will, in time, smell something burning in their "Teflon pan," where nothing ever seemed to stick before. And, that smell will be their own "goose cooking."

At that point, having been taken by surprise, they will tend to react, rather than respond, having not been properly prepared, much less, forewarned, and will quite likely, jump out of, what will be then, a super-heated frying Teflon pan, into the fire." Sadly, some of the first ones to take that reactionary leap will be those very teachers who taught the people for years, the false message of "*peace and safety,*" until that day," when *sudden destruction comes upon them.*" And, you will see the specific messianic prophecy of "*Strike the shepherd that the sheep might be scattered*" fulfilled countless times over, from coast to coast.

Zech. 14:1-2, 5 - "*Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city... .. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you*

will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.” As a side note, this valley happens to run down and into the area known as Bozrah and Petra.

Two basic thoughts that come to mind are these: First, the preceding description is the typical description and consequence of a military invasion. Second, it mirrors many of the characteristics of the liquidation of the Jewish population of the Warsaw Ghetto in WWII.

Rev. 11:13 - *"And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven."* This event, referring to judgment upon the city of Jerusalem well into the “Great Tribulation” period may be quite revealing. The current population of Jerusalem is 800,000+. Let’s say that by that time the population is approximately 1,000,000.

If, per Rev. 11:13, a tenth of the city perishes represented by the number 7,000 as a result of the earthquake, then simple arithmetic would dictate that the total population of Jerusalem at that time would have been reduced to 70,000---a fraction of its former self. Do the math! That’s a mere 7% of Jerusalem’s estimated total population! These simple numbers point to a city which has been significantly depopulated by some cataclysmic event or series of cataclysmic events in rapid succession, such as plagues, wholesale and intensified persecution leading to any combination of mass imprisonment, extermination, forced deportations and flight from the city.

Now, I readily admit that these statistics and extrapolations are speculative, as will be others later on in this message, but it is the overall impression that resonates with me, built upon a foundation of, “What am I convinced of?” I am convinced that it will be the most perilous time in World History, and especially for Christians and Jews. For the Church, it will be both, the worst of times and the best of times, culminating in the most glorious of times.

These types of catastrophes are predetermined to take place during this time in short order, which could easily explain such a significant depopulation of Jerusalem, and giving credence to the assertion that Jerusalem will be anything but a “safe haven” during the *"Time of Jacob's Trouble."* Ezek. 22:19-22 (should read entire chapter) - *“behold, I am going to gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in My anger and in **My wrath** and I will lay you there and melt you. I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of **My wrath**, and you will be melted in the midst of it. As silver is melted in the furnace, so you will be melted in the midst of it; and you will know that I, the Lord, have poured out **My wrath** on you.”* Does this sound like a “safe haven” to you?.

Zeph. 2:1-2 - *“Gather yourselves together; yes, gather, O nation without shame, before the decree takes effect—the day passes like the chaff—before the burning anger of the Lord comes upon you, before the day of the Lord’s anger comes upon you.* Ironically,

those who should have the most spiritual insight in “*understanding the times*” will instead, to their shock and bewilderment, find a multitude that they had sold on a false premise, in the very cauldron of the “*Time of Jacob’s Trouble*.”

And so, the original romanticism of making "aliyah" will be quickly and tragically extinguished, and who will be answerable for the unintended physical and spiritual carnage? “*Speaking that which the Lord has not spoken*” comes at a very high price!” As such, I have become increasingly convinced that the teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture and the notion of Israel being something of a safe haven for Jews in the days ahead is not merely an innocent difference of Biblical interpretation, but an example of ministerial malpractice.

Jer. 14:13-15 - *But, “Ah, Lord God!” I said, “Look, the prophets are telling them, ‘You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.’” Then the Lord said to me, “The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who are prophesying in My name, although it was not I who sent them—yet they keep saying, ‘There will be no sword or famine in this land’—by sword and famine those prophets shall meet their end!*

Lam. 2:14 - *“Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions; **and they have not exposed your iniquity so as to restore you from captivity**, but they have seen for you false and misleading oracles.”* Hosea 5:15 - *“I will go away and return to My place **until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face**; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”* No Godly repentance? No spiritual restoration. No spiritual restoration? No permanent return and possession of the Land. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is an integral part of the Divine process, however, it is not the Divine fulfillment.

Many are familiar with the quote by the famous philosopher and writer, George Santayana, who said, “*Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*” One place that this poignant reminder can be found is inside the museum of the remnants of the Dachau concentration camp. As such, there are a variety of direct, and indirect connections and lessons to be learned from the past and applied to the future.

An article by Victor Sharpe poses the following question in his title, “Looming Destruction: Will Jews Ever Learn?” We could also pose the question as a subtitle, “Will the American Church ever learn?” As I read the following, I believe we can find some lessons and principles that would apply to the American Church as well.

On the eve of the Second World War, Chaim Weizman, who was to become Israel’s first president, wrote the following about the persecutions taking place in Nazi Germany: “It would require the eloquence of a Jeremiah to picture the horrors, the human anguish, of this new Destruction and of a new book of Lamentations to depict the present plight of Israel among the nations.” Several decades earlier, Max Nordau, one of the most noted European philosophers of the 19th century, and supporter of Theodore Herzl, once told

the great Zionist leader and Jewish patriot, Vladimir Jabotinsky, that “the Jew learns not by the way of reason, but from catastrophes. He won’t buy an umbrella merely because he sees clouds in the sky. He waits until he is drenched and catches pneumonia.” This insightful observation foreshadowed the many pogroms that followed in the bloodiest of all centuries: the twentieth century. Sadly, and tragically, in our present day, this mentality applies to much of the American Church as it does to Israel. It also led, inexorably, to the swallowing up of the Jews of Europe by the calamitous German Nazi juggernaut, complete with enforced ghettos, roving killing squads, the death camps, the gas chambers, and the starvation and horrors that forever will darken the face of Europe.

Before the Second World War broke out on September 3, 1939, Jabotinsky repeatedly warned the leaders of the Jewish communities what lay in store for them. He begged them to defend themselves and endeavor to send as many people as possible to safety amongst their fellow Jews in British Mandatory Palestine. This was before the British government slammed shut the gates of Mandatory Palestine to the desperate Jews fleeing Nazi genocide. In his book on the life of Jabotinsky, Shmuel Katz quoted from this man’s article, “Rattling of the Doloys,” in which Jabotinsky condemned the leaders of the Jewish communities and the assimilationists who refused to consider leaving Europe even as the ground was beginning to burn under their feet. He pleaded with them thus in July 1939:

*And I tell you, my dear colleagues, that this means going forward to destruction. D-E-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N. Learn the word by heart; and God grant that I am mistaken. If such words as treachery are being flung around, I regard every one as a traitor who helps to obscure the urgency of the most urgent of all problems besetting the Jews in Eastern Europe.” And he referred to latent anti-Semitism as the sleeping “beast” which soon will again awaken and show itself among the Jews with redoubled appetite. He added, “May God protect His people from a thousandth part of the pleasures the **beast** is promising himself in his brief sleep.”*

Jabotinsky’s appeals fell on mostly deaf ears, and he was accused of being an alarmist. After all, these leaders countered, how could a civilized nation like Germany do such terrible things? It was unthinkable. And the result---the Holocaust---was unthinkable, with the almost total destruction of European Jewry. And, unless the American Church awakens from her slumber and the doctrinal deception of escapism, she will also be caught napping, only to be rudely awakened from her slumber, and asking, “Where is the promise of His coming? In 1940, Jabotinsky died from a massive heart attack---but it is also said that he died of a broken heart, as his prophetic words were beginning to turn into reality.

An excerpt from an article by Oliver Melnick, entitled, “Is the Shadow of Kristallnacht Looming Over Jews Again?“, he writes, “On November 9-10, 1938, an unprecedented event occurred throughout Nazi Germany and parts of Austria and Czechoslovakia. It continues to be remembered as Kristallnacht or “The Night of Broken Glass.” It was a series of pogroms against Jewish communities during which over 260 synagogues and 7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed and 91 people were killed. Additionally, 30,000

Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

The attack against Jews of Europe was orchestrated by the paramilitary division of the Nazi Party known as the SA or "Storm troopers," originally under Herman Goering until Hitler took it over from 1930 to 1945. The chief instigator of the riots was Hitler's Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels. Originally, the reason given for Kristallnacht was the assassination of German diplomat, Ernst von Rath, by a young Polish Jew living in Paris at the time. The life of one German man precipitated the destruction of thousands of Jewish properties and the deportation and death of tens of thousands of Jews. In reality, the death of Ernst von Rath was simply a pretext for pogroms and mass boycotts against the Jewish community. Most reputable historians see Kristallnacht as the inception of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem" and the Holocaust.

It has been said that "Jewish History is written in blood and punctuated in violence," and no amount of human sentimentality or a rewriting of that history or that which has already been spoken by the mouths of the prophets, will prevent the final chapter of Jewish History to be played out any differently, except in its magnitude and apocalyptic culmination. In 1939, world Jewish population was close to 17 million. By 1945, it had been reduced to 11 million.

Today it is estimated that there are 14 million Jews in the world. Let's say that at the outset of the 70th Week of Daniel there are 15 million Jews. During the last 3 ½ years, occurs what is otherwise known as "Jacob's Trouble." According to Ezek. 20 and Amos 9, God is going to purge all the "rebels" and "sinners" of Israel scattered among the nations, and then, brought out from among those nations to possess the Land, forever.

Zech. 13:8 - "It will come about in all the land," Declares the Lord, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it." Some interpret this "two parts" as pertaining to the Land of Israel. I tend to believe that the "two parts" is speaking of world Jewry. As such, I would most welcome being proven wrong about this as it would represent a staggering number of 10 million souls.

But, in no way should we diminish the human tragedy of a future holocaust by referring to it in callous terms of mere statistics. As both a Jew and a Christian, I find that unconscionable. I wanted to briefly interject this point because I think those of us who invest more time and energy in this area than some others need to be ever-mindful of not allowing ourselves to become so caught up in our eschatological research and theological analysis that we, ourselves, become desensitized to the human and spiritual tragedy of these issues and our conversation become too glib.

My own father, a Romanian Jew, lost nearly all of his relatives in the Holocaust. As such, it could be argued that a Jewish believer who shares the fundamental views expressed at this conference might carry a bit more weight as a natural by-product of the combination of the messenger and the message. But, for this added degree of weight to be gained at such a high price necessitates a sense of stewardship and sobriety beyond that of a particular area of interest. God forbid, that this should be pursued as if it were some kind

of hobby. As it is, the message we bear is that of a sledgehammer right between the eyes, and we need not add an impression of somehow being borderline sadists or masochists.

I can recall being a part of a small “end-time” community many years ago. It was a vision that had prophetically come together, but that had become leavened by, what I believed to be, a “survivalist” mentality. It was to be a place of refuge for the Jews during the “*Time of Jacob’s Trouble*” and we were busily preparing for “*that day*,” which we felt was not long in coming. That was 24 years ago. My oldest daughter, who at that time was 9 years old, heard almost nothing but the graphic details of what we felt was the soon-to-be “*Great Tribulation*,” and all the horrors that went along with it.

One day, after more of this sort of talk, she turned to me and said, “Daddy, I don’t want things to end this way!” That was my real “reality check!” It hit me like a ton of bricks, even though, in this country, that reality was, and still remains, essentially theological at this point in time. Sometimes, we need one of those “Thanks! I needed that!” slaps in the face. I believe the following is one of countless examples able to serve such a purpose. And, it is always the children, which the enemy knows, is the key to our greatest vulnerability.

The number of children killed by Hitler and his Nazis is not fathomable and full statistics for the tragic fate of the children will never be known. Estimates range as high as 1.5 million murdered children during the Holocaust. This figure includes more than 1.2 million Jewish children, tens of thousands of Gypsy children and thousands of institutionalized handicapped children. Plucked from their homes and stripped of their childhoods, the children had witnessed the murder of parents, siblings, and relatives. They faced starvation, illness and brutal labor, until they were consigned to the gas chambers.

The sleepy village of Izieu lay overlooking the Rhone river between Lyon and Chambéry in central France. Refugees from Herault were the first arrivals at the Children's home and their Jewish identity was kept secret by the staff. The children, aged between four and seventeen, felt safe and secure, supervised by seven adults. On the morning of April 6, 1944, as the children all settled down in the dining room to drink hot chocolate, the Nazis led by the Butcher of Lyon Klaus Barbie, raided the Home, throwing the crying and terrified children on to the trucks like sacks of potatoes. The little children were deported to the Nazi death camp Auschwitz and murdered immediately upon arrival. Of the forty-four children kidnapped by the Nazis in Izieu, not a single one survived.

One survivor of Auschwitz revealed during Klaus Barbie's trial what happened to the children: 'I asked myself where were the children who arrived with us? In the camp there wasn't a single child to be seen. Then those who had been there for a while informed us of the reality. 'You see that chimney, the one smoke never stops coming out of .. you smell that odor of burned flesh ...' Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, who brought Klaus Barbie to justice in 1983, later wrote: "Forty-four children deported - no mere statistic, but rather forty-four tragedies which continue to cause us pain ..."

It places a human face on our eschatology, which we should endeavor to keep ever before us. For it was the ultimate Expert on eschatology, the Divine Author of *“the blessing and the curse,”* who *“wept over Jerusalem,”* I am reminded of one of the most moving and gut-wrenching scenes I have ever witnessed, which came in the final scene of the movie, *“Schindler’s List.”* That German gentile who saved so many, repeatedly bemoans in a self-inflicted torment, *“I could have gotten more out!” “I could have gotten more out!”*

And, in the torment of this anguish, goes through a litany of ways he could have accomplished that. Imagine that anguish multiplied many times over by those professing to be Christians, who remained silent and did virtually nothing to aid the Jews in their desperate plight. Then, multiply that anguish by those who will repeat that same sin of omission during the *“Time of Jacob’s Trouble?”*

At the conclusion of that scene from the movie we see the Jewish response of overflowing gratitude for what Schindler had done for them. The spokesman from the Jewish survivors attempts to reassure him that he could not have done more. And, in the midst of the anguish of his soul, they surround and embrace him, extending comfort in return for his labors, sacrifices and risks on their behalf. How prophetic is that? Years later, Schindler would be honored by the Jewish people as being formally recognized as a *“Righteous Gentile.”* Today, you will find his grave located in Jerusalem, the only former Nazi to be granted such an honor.

Dan. 11:32b, 12:3, 10 - These scriptures should lead us to recognize and understand the critical purpose of believers during the *“Time of Jacob’s Trouble.”* No! The 144,000 will not be *“Jewish Billy Grahams”* called to evangelize their Jewish kinsmen during the Great Tribulation, which I consider to be a rather convenient interpretation and excuse for Pre-Tribulation Rapture folks to shirk their responsibility to the Jew during *that time.* Or, as Leonard Ravenhill so succinctly put it, *“Today’s church wants to be raptured from responsibility.”* As pertaining to the Jews, the implicit message is, *“After all, the Jews got themselves into this mess, and so, they’ll have to get themselves out of it, on their own!”*

My thought is, since *“salvation is of the Jews,”* I’d like to think that they would want to return the favor..... But, maybe not? *Prov. 24:11-12 - “Deliver those who are being taken away to death, and those who are staggering to slaughter; oh hold them back. If you say, “See, we did not know this,” does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?”*

John 15:13 - *“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”* *“Friends of Israel?”* - The proof of that confession will be tested in the crucible of *“Jacob’s Trouble.”* Just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego represent a type of corporate Israel, as they were cast into the *“fiery furnace,”* will that *“fourth man,”* which I believe can also be applied to representing the Body of Christ, be willing to enter that *“fiery furnace”* with them? And, although being a Jew, myself, I must confess that apart from the grace of God, I am no more capable than was, Thomas, one of the Twelve, in being able to fulfill his spoken commitment to follow his Lord to the death. Remember

what he said? *“Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”* Well, we know how that turned out. As Jesus was being arrested, Thomas, along with the rest of the disciples severed himself from that commitment about as quickly as Peter severed that poor slave’s ear.

And, speaking of Peter, he also found out the hard way at the Garden of Gethsemane concerning the futility of a well-intentioned, albeit, empty boast. We can only boast in what the Lord has accomplished through us. Anything beyond that is mere presumption. J.R.R. Tolkien gave the following advice, *“Let him not vow to walk in the dark, who has not seen the darkness fall.”* But, should the Lord tarry, for many, there is a future day awaiting us where we shall be brought to our own Gardens of Gethsemane, spending a long night of “blood, sweat and tears,” and alone.

Now, any honest Christian knows that some measure of persecution, if not the ultimate price of martyrdom, is always lurking at the door. *“Indeed, all those who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* It is part of the reality of the *“cost of discipleship.”* But, I for one, *“have no confidence in my flesh,”* and can rely on nothing less than that same grace to see me through should God determine that I am to join that fraternity of martyred saints - past, present, and future.

But, to have someone act as a self-designated inquisitor, posing the question, “Are you willing to be martyred for the Lord?” as though it were something of a dare and test of your “spiritual machismo,” what are you supposed to say? “Yes,” may be the answer you feel pressured to give, but then you stand accused of presumption. And, if “No,” the implication is that you are a coward, but at least, an honest one!

Well, after years of pondering how I should answer such a question, albeit, one I feel should never be asked in the first place, I finally came up with the one reply that I was most comfortable with. So, should anyone lay such a challenge at my feet along the lines of, “Are you willing to be a martyr for the Lord and the Jewish people, while also in the midst of witnessing your own family and friends suffering a similar fate? Well, my carefully thought-out reply boiled down to this quip: “Oh, I don’t know, how about you?” But, I am willing to be made willing by His Spirit of grace and power.”

Look! *“If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he must go,”* along with the other Divinely orchestrated options. We must be open to consider the possibility that, some of us who expect, and even want to be martyred may die in bed, and some who expect or hope to die in bed are to be martyred. Jesus foretold Peter that he would later in his life be taken to a place where he would not have gone on his own initiative. All we can do is prepare for whatever may come to us by growing in His grace and being strengthened by His spirit. The bottom line is, we do not have the luxury to choose the time and place and circumstances of our crucifixion.

But, we all will have the opportunity to glorify God in whatever way He may choose for us. For those who so boldly proclaim their support of Israel,“ they can count on that “love” and “friendship” to be severely tested. It will be the ultimate time for these

Evangelicals to “put their money where their mouth is.” It will be the ultimate test for those who made such claims during more peaceful and “in vogue” times to be exposed, and the sentimental supporters of Israel to be purged from the genuine, just as the “*chaff from the wheat*” and the “*sheep from the goats.*”

As such, we should not be surprised when many of these professing “lovers and friends” of Israel are among the first ones to abandon and even despise the Jews. For them, the words, “*Salvation is of the Jews*” having been spoken by the very Word of God, Himself, will be a rather “inconvenient truth.” At that point, the threshold will have been crossed from, “*Has God said?*” to “*It doesn’t matter what God has said!*”

For professing “lovers and friends of Israel,” who adhere to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture--- a doctrine of expediency, if ever there was one, is for me, about as comforting and practically useful as, “*Go in peace, be warmed and be filled.*” Another scripture which comes to mind is this proverb, “*Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.*” How about “*Jacob’s Trouble?*”

So, here is the question I’d like to pose to my Pre-Tribulation Rapture brethren, in particular the leaders and teachers: "If you had the choice, would you be willing, or at least pray about being made willing, to be "left behind" in order to stand with the Jew, to endure suffering and loss, and minister to the Jew at the risk of having to lay down your own life for the sake of their redemption?"

Now, I didn’t ask you what your doctrine was. I asked you a question to reveal to yourself just how deep and genuine this professed “love for Israel” is. You see, this consideration transcends the eschatological viewpoint and gets right down to the literal heart of the matter. In that respect, it makes your doctrinal persuasion a moot point. But, one thing I do know is that “*No greater love has a man than this, than he lay down his life for his friends.*” “*For as you did it unto the least of these, my brethren, you did it unto Me.*” Or, as James expressed it, “*What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works?* You say you are a “lover of the Jew and Israel?” But, you also say, with a little chuckle, “Oh! I am so thankful that I won’t be here for the Tribulation!”

And then, there is this galling little quip that some pre-trib rapture folks like to throw out, along the lines of, “Hey! You can be here for the Tribulation if you want, but I’m getting out of here!” NEWS FLASH! This is not about YOU! I consider such a statement as insulting as it is asinine. It’s not a question of what I want or what you want. That is not the issue! But, I am reminded of the ultimate declaration of faith made by the Lord Himself at the Garden of Gethsemane, where He said, “*Yet not My will, but Your will be done.*” The taking up of our cross does not allow us the luxury of personal preference.

Frankly, I view individuals expressing such contradictory sentiments with a significant amount of skepticism as it relates to their authenticity. You so-called “lovers of Israel” who are all too willing to be raptured before the “*Time of Jacob’s Trouble,*” when the Lord and His Chosen People need you the most, you need to know that your so-called “love and commitment to Israel” rings hollow! Corrie Ten-Boom ingloriously referred to

the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view as “American Doctrine.”

“**American Doctrine**,” is right! For there may have been no better place on earth that could have provided the type of fertile soil and conducive climate, where such an insidious doctrinal seed could take root and flourish. What an indictment upon the Church in this country! What an indictment that the name, “American,” should have become a disparaging term coined by such a saint of God, who knew of what she spoke.

And, to Jewish believers who also hold to this “American Doctrine, I will invoke Mordecai’s words to Esther, once again:” *Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews.*” I also find this quote quite analogous to the Church at large, who has little or no concept concerning her God-mandated calling at the end of the age, because she does not understand that the destinies of the Church and Israel are intertwined, *“that apart from each other they should not be made perfect” “as the one new man.”*

American Christians have the luxury and can afford to believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. While Christians in other nations are having to prove on a daily basis that they are among those *“for whom the world is not worthy,”* by contrast, American Christians are working overtime to make themselves worthy of the world. How often I have envisioned some die-hards continuing with their Pre-Tribulation Teaching Conferences even after the final 7 years has begun. It would almost be funny if the likelihood weren't quite as far-fetched as it might appear and the consequences so tragic.

You remember what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in response to what was being taught along the same lines as a Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine. In short, he reminded them that two significant events had to take place prior to that day---first, the *“great falling away,* and secondly, *“the man of lawlessness be revealed.”* Coupled with that, Paul makes a very strong statement in issuing this directive, *“Let **no one** deceive you.”*

In other words, **anyone** who taught contrary to this doctrine was engaging in deception. Those are very strong words being applied to that “anyone.” It is quite significant to me that Paul spent less than a month with these Thessalonian believers and yet considered this doctrine important enough to have included it as part of their spiritual foundation during his relatively brief stay.

If Jesus held Nichodemus accountable for being “a teacher in Israel for not knowing about spiritual rebirth, and not explicitly expressed in the Old Testament, how much more accountable are teachers who possess the full literal revelation, and where that spiritual rebirth **is** explicitly described in multiple sections of the word?

Without taking the proper measures today to prepare for that time, we will be of little use when we are needed the most. And, as if there weren’t enough doctrinal fronts to contend with, there are Post-Tribulation Rapture folks who also hold to Replacement Theology. As far as I’m concerned, in the final analysis, getting it half right is no better than getting it all wrong.

Perhaps the greatest consequence of having bought into the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine is that as it becomes evident that the rapture hasn't taken place before, literally, all hell breaks loose, many of these people will be among those who ask, "*Where is the promise of His coming?*" There is but little doubt in my mind that this will contribute significantly to the "*great falling away.*"

Another issue that has cropped up within the Church as never before is, "Who is a Jew?" Apparently, based upon some popular teaching in recent years, virtually anyone who desires to be, or is crazy enough to want to be, can be a Jew. But, I think I can provide you with a pretty simple answer as I understand it from my "not so scholarly" studies, both Biblically and historically. I say, it's all about the bloodlines, regardless of outward practice.

Now, how much Jewish blood is required to be considered a genuine Jew? I don't know for sure. But, in the very least, it would only require one grandparent. If it If one parent is Jewish, you are Jewish. Biblically, the seed is passed through the paternal side. That is why non-Jewish women such as Rahab and Ruth could be mentioned as part of the genealogy of Jesus.

According to Rabbinical teaching, the only way to know for sure if a person is a Jew is that the mother is Jewish. Not unlike much of the Talmud, it was a buffer and a response to the many pogroms and violations, which were all too frequent in post-First Century Jewish History. But, referring back to the Biblical definition, or requirement, for being recognized as a Jew, either parent being Jewish would suffice. Now, having said that, I can appreciate the fact that this is not a universal view, especially, among Orthodox rabbis. But, let me ask this question: Since when have the Hitler's of this world ever cared about what the rabbis thought?

Furthermore, we cannot ignore the spiritual component, meaning, the intentions of Satan to thwart the purposes of God with respect to His covenant with the Jewish People, albeit, Divinely orchestrated under the sovereignty of God. God knows who and where every Jew is, and has allowed Satan access to that knowledge in carrying out His judgments. And, there is no better example than what the Jews experienced in Germany just prior to the Second World War.

As a whole, they were arguably the most assimilated and secular Jews in all of Europe, with many having long since kept relatively hidden or buried altogether, any attachment to Judaism or retaining any semblance of Jewish identity. And, yet, when it came down to "crunch time," they "could run, but they could not hide." Even the most assimilated among them were hunted down and sent to the camps. Many could be heard to say to one another in bewilderment, "How did they know!?!". The scriptural warning, "*Be sure your sin will find you out,*" may have more far-reaching applications than one might realize.

Jer. 16:16-18- "*Behold, I am going to send for many fisherman, declares the Lord, "and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters and they will hunt*

them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks. For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes. I will first doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.” Keep in mind, Jesus told His disciples that He would make them “*fishers of men,*” not “*hunters.*”

Albert Barnes, a 19th Century American theologian offered the following commentary on this passage: “*The scattering of the people is to be like that of hunted animals, of which but few escape, the ancient method of hunting being to enclose a large space with beaters and nets, and so drive everything within it to some place where it was destroyed. The destruction of the whole male population was one of the horrible customs of ancient warfare, a process described by the Greek historian of the 5th Century B.C., Herodotus, as "sweeping the country with a drag-net."*

For the first time in European History, even conversion to Christianity (or Catholicism) could not save the Jews, including Bonhoeffer's "Confessing Church." And frankly, in my research, there is reason to believe that, for the most part, leadership of the church wasn't so concerned for the fate of Jews as Jews, as it was losing church members just because they happened to be Jews. The Nazi's didn't care what a Jew believed or didn't believe. Recognizing that it was Satan who made certain of that is not so difficult to swallow. But, to acknowledge that God made certain of that in fulfillment of His covenantal judgments is enough to make some Evangelicals choke, for which there is no theological Heimlich Maneuver.

As for Pre-Tribulation Rapture “lovers of Israel,” they should take heed to Peter’s admonition! “*Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal amongst you, which comes upon you for **your** testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.*” Be assured that when your beloved Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine becomes a “ruptured” doctrine and you suddenly find yourself “left behind” in a world that, according to Scripture, meets the prophetic criteria known as the “*Great Tribulation,*” you may very well have the opportunity to prove just how genuine that professed love for the Jew was. And, I would even go so far as to say, that by that time, I would imagine that your treasured “Left Behind” book series will have long since been-----well-----left behind.

Excerpt from a letter Corrie Ten-Boom wrote in 1974

There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be able to escape all this. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution.

In China, the Christians were told, "Don't worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated – raptured." Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly, "We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution, rather than telling them Jesus would

come first. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes, – to stand and not faint."

I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation, but more than sixty percent of the Body of Christ across the world has already entered into the tribulation. There is no way to escape it. We are next.

Since I have already gone through prison for Jesus' sake, and since I met the Bishop in China, now every time I read a good Bible text I think, "Hey, I can use that in the time of tribulation." Then I write it down and learn it by heart.

When I was in the concentration camp, a camp where only twenty percent of the women came out alive, we tried to cheer each other up by saying, "Nothing could be any worse than today." But we would find the next day was even worse. During this time a Bible verse that I had committed to memory gave me great hope and joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part evil is spoken of, but on your part He is glorified"(I Peter 3:14). I found myself saying, "Hallelujah! Because I am suffering, Jesus is glorified!"

In America, the churches sing, "Let the congregation escape tribulation", but in China and Africa the tribulation has already arrived. This last year alone more than two hundred thousand Christians were martyred in Africa. Now things like that never get into the newspapers because they cause bad political relations. But I know. I have been there.

We need to think about that when we sit down in our nice houses with our nice clothes to eat our steak dinners. Many, many members of the Body of Christ are being tortured to death at this very moment, yet we continue right on as though we are all going to escape the tribulation.

Several years ago I was in Africa in a nation where a new government had come into power. The first night I was there some of the Christians were commanded to come to the police station to register. When they arrived they were arrested and that same night they were executed. The next day the same thing happened with other Christians. The third day it was the same. All the Christians in the district were being systematically murdered.

The fourth day I was to speak in a little church. The people came, but they were filled with fear and tension. All during the service they were looking at each other, their eyes asking, "Will this one I am sitting beside be the next one killed? Will I be the next one?" The room was hot and stuffy with insects that came through the screenless windows and swirled around the naked bulbs over the bare wooden benches. I told them a story out of my childhood.

"When I was a little girl, " I said, "I went to my father and said, "Daddy, I am afraid that I will never be strong enough to be a martyr for Jesus Christ." "Tell me," said Father, "When you take a train trip to Amsterdam, when do I give you the money for the ticket?"

Three weeks before?" "No, Daddy, you give me the money for the ticket just before we get on the train." "That is right," my father said, "and so it is with God's strength. Our Father in Heaven knows when you will need the strength to be a martyr for Jesus Christ. He will supply all you need – just in time..."

My African friends were nodding and smiling. Suddenly a spirit of joy descended upon that church and the people began singing, "In the sweet, by and by, we shall meet on that beautiful shore." Later that week, half the congregation of that church was executed. I heard later that the other half was killed some months ago. But I must tell you something. I was so happy that the Lord used me to encourage these people, for unlike many of their leaders, I had the word of God. I had been to the Bible and discovered that Jesus said He had not only overcome the world, but to all those who remained faithful to the end, He would give a crown of life.

How can we get ready for the persecution? First we need to feed on the Word of God, digest it, make it a part of our being. This will mean disciplined Bible study each day as we not only memorize long passages of scripture, but put the principles to work in our lives. Next we need to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Not just the Jesus of yesterday, the Jesus of History, but the life-changing Jesus of today who is still alive and sitting at the right hand of God. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is no optional command of the Bible, it is absolutely necessary.

Those earthly disciples could never have stood up under the persecution of the Jews and Romans had they not waited for Pentecost. Each of us needs our own personal Pentecost, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We will never be able to stand in the tribulation without it. In the coming persecution we must be ready to help each other and encourage each other. But we must not wait until the tribulation comes before starting. The fruit of the Spirit should be the dominant force of every Christian's life.

Many are fearful of the coming tribulation, they want to run. I, too, am a little bit afraid when I think that after all my eighty years, including the horrible Nazi concentration camp, that I might have to go through the tribulation also. But then I read the Bible and I am glad. When I am weak, then I shall be strong, the Bible says. Betsy and I were prisoners for the Lord, we were so weak, but we got power because the Holy Spirit was on us. That mighty inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit helped us through.

No, you will not be strong in yourself when the tribulation comes. Rather, you will be strong in the power of Him who will not forsake you. For seventy-six years I have known the Lord Jesus and not once has He ever left me, or let me down. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15) for I know that to all who overcome, He shall give the crown of life. Hallelujah!"

Fred London

