

Finishing Well

Lesson # 37 History & Background Of The Fish Gate Oct. 6, 2021

Message from the Fish Gate: You Are My Witnesses! My Ambassador! Protect the Marketplace!
God chose to accomplish His plan through a special, chosen people > Israel.

Zech. 2:8-9 He who touches Israel touches the apple of His [God's] eye.

For surely, I will shake My hand against them.

1. God first promised the Messiah after Adam and Eve's fall into sin.

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

➤ Protoevangelium = Latin for First Gospel or First Gospel Proclamation

2. God later confirmed the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Gen. 12:1-3 I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God would use one nation to bless ALL NATIONS. His heart of concern reached out to ALL.

3. Jesus Christ, the Messiah would be born out of the nation of Israel; tribe of Judah.

God's choosing of Israel:

Lev. 20:26 And you shall be holy unto Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated [severed] you from other people, that you should be Mine.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 "For you are a holy people to the LORD thy God; the LORD thy God has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people on the face of the earth.

⁷ The LORD did not set His love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the fewest of all people; ⁸ but because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore, know that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.

Ex. 19:3-6 Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel:

⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,

then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

➤ When God blessed the nation Israel and set this nation apart, He had the other nations in view. God wanted all the peoples of the world to look at the nation Israel so that they would come to know Israel's God because of Israel's witness. Israel, in the middle of the world, was to be a signpost that would point very clearly to the only true God.

God's Promise: I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers—only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses."

➤ Your enjoyment of the land depends on obedience to the law of the Lord.

God's Witness on Earth

Isaiah 43:1, 21 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name;

You are Mine. This people I have formed for Myself; They shall show forth My praise.

Isa. 43:10-11 "You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He.

Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.

I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior.

The word "WITNESS" comes from a verb which means "to say something again and again."

A WITNESS may be defined as "one who strengthens or confirms the saying of another."

Israel, as God's witness, was to strengthen and confirm the saying of God Himself.

Israel was to draw attention to ALL: the fact that the LORD was the only God:

Isa. 43:12 "Ye are My witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God. [Missionary Nation]

Isa. 44:8 You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me?

Yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Isa. 45:22 "Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth!

For I am God, and there is none else.

God Says: I am the only God; the only LORD and the only Savior. There is NONE ELSE!

Witness says: Yes, He is the only God, the only LORD and the only Savior. There is NONE Else!

I Kings 8:58-60 That He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers.

And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel at all times..., that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. God's intent was for Israel to be a distinct people, a nation who pointed others towards God and His promised provision of a Redeemer, Messiah, and Savior.

God's Instructions for Israel - Deut. 4; I Kings 8:61

1. Listen to, believe, and follow His Word closely.

2. "Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day."

3. PRACTICE His Word. Do not add to it or take from it.

4. Teach the Word to their children.

Why did God give these commands? Other people are LOOKING AT and WATCHING you.

Deut. 4:6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say,

'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

Deut. 4:7 They will see that these people have a real and right relationship with the living God!

Deut. 4:8 God had given His wonderful LAW [His Word] to the nation Israel:

The nation Israel had POWER as a WITNESS as long as they were DIFFERENT.

They had a relationship with God that the other nations did not have.

They had the Word of God which the other nations did not have.

They heard the voice of God [Deut. 4:33] which no other people had ever heard.

God had worked for them POWERFULLY as He had not done for any other nation. [Deut. 4:34]

Danger: If Israel should forget the Lord and forget His Word

Deut. 4:23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.

Challenge: By conducting their lives in conformity with the demands of the Law, Israel would have been able to function as God's servant nation, representing God and His character to the nations of the world.

Result: Throughout her history Israel had to grapple with the reality that she was related to all the nations through creation and that God had called her to be separate from them.

Soon they would begin to live, talk and behave like all the other nations.

The peoples of the world would look at Israel, and they would see no difference.

They saw Israel living UNHOLY lives just as everyone else.

Warnings: The inexorable decline was marked by the rise of great prophets who warned of God's grave displeasure at the failure of His people to reflect His character for all the world to see.

Israel's Failure: Israel failed to be the kind of witness God desired. The nation turned away from the LORD and His Word. The 10 northern tribes [Israel] were taken captive by the Assyrians. The 2 southern tribes [Judah] would be left alone in the land.

Manasseh: Evil King Who Repented

➤ First king of Judah who was not contemporary with the northern kingdom of Israel. II Chron. 33:1-13; II Kings 21:1-18 Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king, and he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem. ² But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations [Amorites] whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

Manasseh led the Kingdom of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray into idolatry and to practice deeds more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the people of Israel. [II Chron. 33:9]

A. He rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down.

B. He raised up altars for Baal and made an Asherah pole as Ahab king of Israel had done.

- Comparing him to the northern king Ahab is a damning indictment of the southern ruler.

C. He took the carved Asherah pole and put it in the Temple of Solomon where the Lord had sworn to put His name forever.

- D. He worshiped all the host of heaven and served them; worship the "starry host."
- E. He built a detestable idol in the temple of the Lord.
- F. There was to be only one altar in the Temple Court, but he added altars dedicated to various gods. He made Jehovah one "god" among many.
- G. He practiced the religion of Molech and caused his sons to pass through the altar of fire in the Valley of Hinnom.
- H. Practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and familiar spirits.
- I. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.
- J. The king filled Jerusalem with 'innocent blood' as he murdered those who stood in his way. He was the most evil king of Judah.

What Will It Take? The LORD, by His prophets spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.

33:11 Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria,
 1. Took Manasseh with hooks [in his nose], bound him with bronze *chains*, and carried him off to Babylon. [Wiersbe: He was treated like a steer being led to slaughter. He deserved it.]
 2. Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,¹³ and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom.
 Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God. [II Chron. 33:12-13]

- King Manasseh returned from captivity as a changed man.
- He repented from evil and feared the Lord.

True Repentance? Matt. 3:8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

II Chron. 33:14-16 When he returned home, he proved the reality of his conversion by seeking to undo all the evil he had done.

- Set about to obey God. He got rid of the idols on the high places throughout the land.
- The temple was cleared of idols and objects that God had forbidden.
- The altars to false gods in the temple and city were pulled down and removed.
- He repaired the altar of the LORD, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it.
- He commanded the people of Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel so as to correct his sin of misleading the people into idolatry.

After this he built a high wall [of defense] outside the City of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, and for the entrance of the Fish Gate; and it enclosed Ophel, and he raised it to a very great height. Then he put military captains in all the fortified cities of Judah.

Punishment Still Follows: Wiersbe: "It appeared as though God took His hand off the nation and allowed all the filth to pour out of the people's hearts."

If we rely on the prophetic portions of the Bible alone, the portrait that is painted is of an evil man - a mass murderer and idol worshiper whose reign was so tainted it would later be:

- the cause of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BC

II Kings 21:11-14 Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations, and has done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols,

Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says:

Behold, I am bringing such EVIL on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle... I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and hand them over to their enemies,...

II Kings 21:16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Two years after Manasseh's death, King Josiah inherited the throne.

II Kings 23:25-27 Even King Josiah, whom the Bible praises as the greatest king since David, could not turn away God's wrath: "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of His fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke Him to anger."

A similar explanation is given for military raids during Jehoiakim's reign: [great grandchild] II Kings 24:1-4 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servants the prophets. Surely these things happened to Judah according to the Lord's command, in order to remove them from His presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done. And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon

Many years after King Manasseh's death [~16 yrs.], during the days of Jeremiah, God still remembered King Manasseh's sins against the Kingdom of Judah.

Jer. 15:1-4 Then the LORD said to me, "Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people. Cast them out of My sight and let them go forth.

² And it shall be, if they say to you, 'Where should we go?' then you shall tell them,

'Thus says the LORD: "Such as *are* for death, to death;

And such as *are* for the sword, to the sword; And such as *are* for the famine, to the famine;

And such as *are* for the captivity, to the captivity.'"

"And I will appoint over them four forms of destruction," says the LORD: "the sword to slay, the dogs to drag, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy.

⁴ I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.

- God had chosen them to be a blessing to the nations of the world, but now they would become "abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth, an object of scorn."
- If God were to postpone judgment it would only encourage the nation to continue sinning even more. God was weary with their repenting. [Jer. 15:6]
- Do not think God enjoyed sending judgment to His people. If He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked [Ezek. 18:23, 32], He certainly has not pleasure in the death of His own people!
- God is longsuffering, but when His people resist His gracious call and rebel against His will, He has no alternative but to send chastening.

The Lord sent prophet after prophet to warn the Israelites of severe consequences IF: they did not repent of their apostasy and fulfill His purpose to be a witness and point all peoples to Him. Time after time, the people did not heed the warning, and they suffered for it.

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of good king Josiah of Judah from 640-609 BC.

- Primary target for God's message of judgment was Judah who had fallen into grievous sin under the reign of King Manasseh.
- His prophecy shouted for godliness and purity in a nation sinful to its core.
- Built their own places of worship to revere other gods [high places].
- Desecrated the temple which was the dwelling place of God. [Zeph. 1:9]

Josiah's Reforms: II Chron. 34:3 His 8th year as king [16 yrs. old], he began to seek the Lord.

II Chron. 34:3-7 In his 12th year [20 yrs.], he began to purge Judah & Jerusalem.

II Chron. 34:8 In his 18th year of his reign [26 years old], he began the repairs of the house of the Lord. The book of the Law was found and read to the king.

- The neglect of the Law shows the depth of the apostasy during Manasseh & Amon.
- King Josiah discovered the extent of Judah's disobedience and saw they were in danger of God's wrath. He was so devastated he rent his clothes in mourning.
- He sent his advisers to Huldah the prophetess to seek guidance.

The Prophetess Huldah Responded to King Josiah With A Word from God

II Kings 22:15-20 And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

¹⁷ Because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore, My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

¹⁸ But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

¹⁹ Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when you heard what I spoke against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and have rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.

²⁰ Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. [See also II Chron. 34:20-28]

II Chron. 34:30-32 After reading the Law of the Covenant, he made a covenant with the LORD and demanded the people take a stand.

II Kings 23:4-25 He purged ALL the land of false worship.

II Chron. 35:1-19 They kept the Passover. [Passover had last been observed under Hezekiah]

- Josiah died and they became less different from the heathen people and pointed less and less to the God they were supposed to represent.

Zephaniah mentions the day of the Lord more than any other book in the Old Testament.

- Near fulfillment: God's impending time of judgment on Judah and its destruction
- Far fulfillment: God's eventual judgment and restoration of all humanity
Total destruction of Babylon

Zeph. 1:1-2, 10-11 "The word of The Lord which came unto Zephaniah... in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. I will utterly consume all things from off the land,...

¹⁰ And there shall be In That Day," says the LORD,

- The noise of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate [fishermen had markets]
- and an howling from the second, [2nd quarter = Mishneh= where rich lived in their fashionable houses, built from the wages owed to the poor]
- and a great crashing from the hills.

¹¹ Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.

- Maktesh = market and business district where the merchants and bankers were located
- Their wealth would be confiscated

Parallel Zep. 1:10-11 with Jer. 9:23 Thus saith the Lord,

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
neither let the mighty man glory in his might,
let not the rich man glory in his riches:

Mishneh = wise men; like blind men 1:17
Fish Gate = where mighty men were put
Maktesh = rich men; their silver Zeph. 1:18

Zeph. 1:7b Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD; day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests.

A Great Sacrifice [Zeph. 1:7-13]

They were accustomed to attending communal sacrifices. BUT this sacrifice would be different.

- God was hosting the sacrifice. His guests were the Babylonians.
- The sacrifices to be offered were the people of Judah [Zeph. 1:8-9]
- God will punish them because they have abandoned His Word, adopted foreign practices, wearing of foreign clothes and worshipping foreign gods.
- God's guests, the Babylonians, would enter the city, plunder it and destroy it.

- So thoroughly would the Babylonians do their work that they would search the city carefully and find even the people who were hiding. [Zeph. 1:12]

The prophet's third picture of the day of the Lord is that of A Great Battle [Zeph. 1:14-18]. The description is a vivid one: You can hear the cries of the captives and the shouts of the warriors; you can see thunderclouds of judgment and flashes of lightning; you behold the victims' blood poured out like cheap dust and their "entrails like filth."

What a scene of destruction and carnage because the nation refused to submit to the word of the Lord. The fire of God's jealous zeal would consume everything, and no one would escape. Even the wealthy would not be able to ransom their lives, and the enemy would take away their ill-gotten riches.

Zephaniah described an illustration of what will happen in the end times when God's judgment falls on a wicked world in the Tribulation Period. That final day of the Lord will be far more terrible [Rev. 6—19]. There will be cosmic disturbances that will affect the course of nature and cause people to cry out for a place to hide.

- Amos 5:18; 8:9; Joel 2:1-2, 10, 30-32; Rev. 6:12-17

Jer. 26:36 Now therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence':

This is a future you chose by refusing to REPENT.

It took the destruction of Jerusalem and the whole kingdom of Judah and their going into exile to atone for the sins that King Manasseh did during his reign. The days before her destruction marked the fulfillment of Jeremiah's words about the coming famine, pestilence, and sword.

They were dark days and full of terrors and horrors. The siege of Jerusalem lasted from the winter months in Zedekiah's ninth year as king to the summer of his eleventh year.

This works out to be about thirty months of an increasingly terrible situation.

The famine was so severe the people were cooking and eating their own children.

Eventually, King Nebuchadnezzar delivered the final blow of Judah's destruction during the reign of King Zedekiah, by breaking into Jerusalem, killing as many as he desired, looting the Temple of Solomon, setting fire to Jerusalem and carrying the people of Judah to Babylon as captives.

God had said He would reject Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon because of the evil that King Manasseh had done. [II Kings 23:24-27]

Zephaniah prophesied that a cry will come from the Fish Gate on the Day of the Lord

Message from the Fish Gate: You Are My Witness! My Ambassador! Protect the Marketplace!

Nebuchadnezzar's forces > Point of entry: Fish Gate = Mournful Cry