

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of February 18, 2018

THEME: "Warnings by the Prophets"

REBELLIOUS HEARTS

SundayRead Jeremiah 5:20-29

"But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: He reserves unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you." The prophet in this Bible reading gives a solemn warning about unbelief that should cause all skeptics about the credibility of the truth of the Bible, God's Holy Scriptures, to take notice. We are told that failing to give God the glory for His marvelous creation and the amazing truth of Scriptures is actually rebelling against God, a losing battle! This may well be the worst thing any individual can do. The Almighty God of the universe is a loving God, full of grace and mercy. He has made a way for sinful humanity to be reconciled to Himself. He does not overlook sin, but sent His Son to pay the penalty of sin on our behalf. That is the fundamental point of all Scriptures: God's redemptive plan for humanity. Our Bible reading points out that rain that provides the wherewithal to make the fruit of the harvest to meet our physical needs is by the goodness of God. Whereas sinful man rebelled against God, God managed to maintain His holiness by having His Son take on a human body to suffer the penalty for man's sin in a substitutionary death as the perfect Lamb whose blood was the sufficient sacrifice allowing God to pardon all who would accept His Son Jesus as personal Savior. Refusal to accept Christ leaves a man with his rebellious heart causing him eternal death in hell. Yes, God sends the rain to maintain our physical life, and He sent His Son to restore our spiritual life!

WICKED HEARTS

MondayRead Jeremiah 17:9-13

"The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?" The revolting and rebellious human heart is actually a wicked heart. That is a real commentary and comparison between the human standards for right and wrong and God's holiness. The fact that man was made in the image of God means that there is good in him; but that was compromised when man fell prey to the enemy of God, Satan himself, and believed his lies rather than sticking with God's truth. As a result, man died spiritually and was subjected to the wicked devices of the devil. Having lost his divine nature as a result of sin, his heart became wicked with an inclination toward fleshly lusts and materialism, an infatuation with the things of this world. Were it not for the restraining power of the Spirit of God on this earth, the wicked hearts of humanity would go wild. Evidence of that are countries whose leaders totally and openly rebel against the true and living God. That wickedness of human heart has resulted in a rash of terrorism around the world, and the more people reject God's holiness as revealed in His Word, the restraint on evil is weakened. We see that in our own nation since it has abandoned the Bible as the rock of morality. Praise God for true believers; they are the temple of God in this Church Age. When they depart at the Rapture of the Church, the wickedness will be virtually unrestrained resulting in that Great Tribulation.

CONFUSED MINDS

Tuesday Read Isaiah 5:20-21

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Having abandoned the righteousness of God as revealed in the Bible, right and wrong in a culture is determined by the rebellious hearts and minds of men. That is not true righteousness, but is generated by spiritual darkness, blinded to God's truth. How could man come up with better cultural norms than God? When our system of public education for children removed the regular reading of the Bible, it relinquished its moral authority. This was the warning of the prophet in today's Bible reading. Obviously, humans disagree on right and wrong, leaving our court system in a dilemma, who now make judgments on the thinking of the majority political persuasion. How can appointees of political

opposites agree on proper behavior? The result is confusion! Thinking themselves to be wise, they are what God calls fools in Romans 1:21-32. People who reject God's moral authority in His Word are left with confused minds!

LIP SERVICE

Wednesday..... Read Isaiah 29:13-16

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among the people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid." The prophet Isaiah exposed the false teachers who make a phony profession of faith in God while substituting their own ideas for the commandments of God. In Matthew 15:7-8, Jesus referenced this very prophecy in describing the religious and educational leaders in Israel in His time with these words: *Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."* All religions that deviate from God's truth in His Holy Scriptures, according to this teaching of Jesus, are guilty of hypocritical lip service. That certainly should be considered a warning in determining with whom we want to join in worship! Any teaching inconsistent with the Bible, however religious sounding it is, is nothing but lip service. God's Word is absolute truth!

NEGLIGENT LEADERS

Thursday Read Ezekiel 34:1-5

"And they were scattered because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered." Assuming leadership in work of God carries a great responsibility in that it means caring for a flock of believers, all of whom belong to the Shepherd of the sheep, as Jesus referred to Himself in John 10:14. To deviate from God's truth and substituting personal ideas for God's absolute truth causes those under your care to miss out on what should be the basis for their own living. If teaching is in error, those who place their trust in human conjecture will lose their way. God wants people to live their lives as a journey to heaven as their eternal home. False teaching will keep a person on the road that leads to hell. The big picture is the devil using men to lure people away from God's truth. By having religion sound proper with what seems to be true light, people never see themselves as lost sinners. The truth is that any religious teaching opposing God's truth is Satanic deception. Shepherds of people are responsible to God for the spiritual well-being of the flock. Not to do so by teaching God's Word means they will never be brought to the Savior, but left prey to Satanic deception propagated through negligent leaders.

ENLIGHTENED LEADERS

Friday Read I Peter 5:1-3

"The elders which are among you I exhort...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." Responsible shepherds of the flock of God must lead by the commandments of God as revealed in the Bible, both in their teaching and their setting the example for Christian living. The latter is as equally important, if not moreso, than the teaching. Not being a good example negates the teaching! Good leaders take great pains to open dialogue with the flock in order to know as much about them as is possible. I like the command in Proverbs 27:23 as a rule for undershepherds caring for God's flock of believers: *"Be diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds."* And the shepherds assigned by God to care for the flocks should do so willingly, expecting nothing in return. Good shepherds get their reward from the joy of serving the flock and serving our God! If churches have elders who are committed to doing things God's way, those are churches that are truly serving our Savior and bringing glory to God. Families of the parishioners are the great beneficiaries!

TITHES: TREASURES IN HEAVEN

Saturday Read Malachi 3:8-12

"Bring ye all of your tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." This Scripture is more an encouragement than a warning, but it serves somewhat as a warning about poor financial management in that it could mean a loss of God's blessings! Basically God is telling us that those people who have as a high priority the support of His work will be rewarded for their faithfulness. Those rewards are not necessarily financial prosperity, but could be. Whatever the blessings from heaven are, believers who understand the joy of giving to God will experience His blessings in whatever way our loving Heavenly Father seems

appropriate for those of His children. Although we live in a materially minded world, money is not the key to true joy; and actually could be the cause for misery. The same thought as mentioned by the prophet is mentioned by an apostle in II Corinthians 9:6-7: "*But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly: and he that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give: not grudgingly, or out of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*" What a tremendous privilege it is to be investors into the work of God and laying up treasures in heaven! Rewards now and rewards then!