



Light from the Word

Editor's Note: Each quarter of this year will feature articles related to the Four Pillar Mission of our church respectively: Presenting the Gospel, Nurturing the Believer, Preserving Sound Doctrine, and Offering Deeds of Service.

An Enduring Invitation to Repent

God has consistently called men to depart from sin.

From the beginning of time, men have done things that were hurtful to others and to themselves. God never intended for man to hurt (sin against) himself or others. Before Cain murdered his brother Abel, the Lord entreated him to resist sin and change his attitude, calling on Cain to repent. But Cain did not turn from his evil.

Through Moses, Joshua, and many Judges, the Lord patiently called generation after generation to turn from sin and choose righteousness. As the Israelites repeatedly rejected the Lord—worshipping idols, committing great evils, and justifying themselves in all manner of evil—the Lord sent prophets over and over to call them back to truth and justice.

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Ezek. 18:30-32).

This consistent call continued through John the Baptist and was amplified by Jesus. As He taught the ways of peace and righteousness, His call to forsake sin touched many hearts; moving corrupt bureaucrats

like Zaccheus, promiscuous women like the “woman at the well,” and simple fishermen like James and John; to renounce sin and live transformed lives. When asked by his countrymen what they should do in response to the realization that Jesus was the Son of God, Peter replied, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

The Creator of all has consistently desired and invited His creation to turn from evil and choose good. From the beginning, God spoke of a Redeemer and had His prophets confirm the promise.

As the first sin in history was discovered, God rebuked the deceiving serpent by prophesying of the coming Redeemer who would defeat the very root of evil. *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Gen. 3:15).

To Abraham, God promised, *“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice”* (Gen. 22:18). As Abraham raised his son, Isaac, even in the middle of a great test of faith in God, Abraham prophesied of the coming Redeemer, saying, *“My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together”* (Gen. 22:8).

Hundreds of years later, John the Baptist proclaimed the fulfilling of Abraham's prophecy. *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

Throughout the Old Testament, men of God spoke and wrote prophecies of Jesus that were fulfilled and witnessed by thousands who followed Jesus – hearing Him teach and observing the miracles He performed. David wrote of His

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crucifixion, Isaiah wrote of His suffering, and Joel foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps none linked redemption and repentance more clearly than Isaiah who wrote: “*And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD*” (Isa. 59:20). In writing their Gospels, Matthew mentions nine specific prophecies fulfilled by Jesus, and John mentions one. A careful reading of the Old Testament reveals dozens more.

The fulfilling of these prophecies about Jesus testifies both to the truth of the prophet as well as the truth that Jesus was sent by God to be the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. There have been many false prophets through the ages and many yet today. Moses told the children of Israel, “*When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him*” (Deut. 18:22). The clear fulfilling of so many prophecies is a powerful

confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God.

Just as there were false teachers and prophets in the earliest days of the church, there are many false prophets and teachers who speak in the name of the Lord today. Some have falsely prophesied of Christ’s return, and others have declared various men to be “the Antichrist.” Some teachers err, subtly insinuating that sin is unavoidable, saying “it’s just human,” to excuse sin. Others more obviously and overtly declare that evil is good and good is evil. Others presume to declare that all men sin each and every day, “*having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof*” (2 Tim. 3:5). The Lord commanded John to write to the church at Pergamos: “*I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent ...*” (Rev. 2:14-15).

The truth is that we were not redeemed to go back to sin. Jesus became sin for us that we might be made righteous in Him. “*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made*

the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Those speaking by the Spirit of God will demonstrate the truth of their teaching by obedience and good works. Paul (The Apostle of Grace) warns Titus of such times and teachers, saying, “*They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (Titus 1:16).

God’s call today is the same as it has always been: that men should repent, believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, and live overcoming lives in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Ezek. 18:30-32).