

KINGDOM SPIRIT



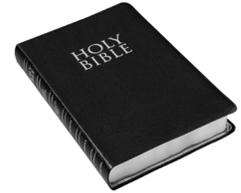
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“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Matthew 6:33



Issue 801

JOEL—ISAIAH

Last month we began to insert a study of the writings of the prophets into the story of the Bible, that we are following, during the time of their writing. Another of the so-called “minor prophets” who prophesied during the time of King Uzziah, or Azariah, is the prophet Joel. Unlike Amos and Hosea, however, Joel focuses most of his attention on Zion, Judah and Jerusalem. He begins by warning of a coming invasion that will desolate the land. He intensifies this warning, calling on the people to blow the trumpet in Zion and in all His holy mountain (kingdom). As we read Joel, it is obvious that his prophecies have a second or future fulfillment as well, but for now, let us deal with the first, or immediate fulfillment. He extols the strength of this invading army and calls upon the people to repent and tells them God will bless them. Then he looks ahead to the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem that he says is going to happen, and then to the ending of that captivity. He promises a re-gathering of Israel. Looking far into the future, Joel discusses the ultimate battle after which all the world would know God and that He dwells in Zion, ruling all the world.

Isaiah, one of the so called “major prophets,” also began his writing and prophesying during the time of King Uzziah and continued through the reign of King Hezekiah. The first 39 chapters deal with the time from Jeroboam (the

second) of Israel through the three captivities that took all of Israel and most of Judah into the Assyrian captivity. Though he begins by describing a vision he had concerning Judah and Jerusalem, his main concern is with Israel. In this vision we just mentioned, he saw how sinful Israel had been and how they were going into captivity for their sins, but Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion is to be left a cottage in a vineyard. He says that except a remnant, Jerusalem, had been left, they would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah.

Isaiah tells Israel, as did the other prophets, that their religion, which had become no more than a ritual, was an abomination to God. He admonishes them to, truly from the heart, return to righteousness and God will forgive, but if they refuse, He will destroy them with a sword.

Isaiah states what seems to be a promise that in the last days, God’s kingdom will rule all other kingdoms and that many people would come to this kingdom to learn the ways of the LORD, that Israel will judge among the nations and peace would prevail. Then he asks God why He has forsaken His people Israel at this time. God’s answer: because they search after riches, powers, and idols and worship the works of their own hands. But, He assures them that man’s worshipping of man will be brought down and God will be exalted. He says His people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge and then He says woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, and that take darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Warning is made to those that are wise in their own eyes.

In the days of Ahaz, king of Judah, Israel and Syria joined forces against Judah, and Isaiah went to tell Ahaz not to worry about them as Ephraim, or Israel, would soon be broken up so that they be not a people. He then told Ahaz to ask for a sign but when Ahaz refused to do so, he gave him a sign anyway in Isa. 7:14-16. It is two-fold in that He first foretells of the birth of Christ and then says that before a baby could grow to know good and evil, the lands of Syria and Israel will both be forsaken of their kings. Then he tells of the coming Assyrians and the destruction they bring.

In chapt. 9, we're again told of the birth of Christ and that He would be king upon the throne of David. There will be no end to the increase of His government and peace, and He will order His kingdom and establish it with judgment. We're told in verse 7, **"the zeal of the LORD of hosts"** will perform this.

He then tells of God sending the Assyrians against Israel. However, because the king of Assyria will think he has done all this by his own power, God will punish him when he has completed this job God has for him. He asks in chapt. 10:15, **"Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?"**

Assyria will be destroyed. He does tell the people of Zion (Jerusalem) that they need not be afraid of the Assyrian. Though the Assyrians may smite them with the rod for a little while, the Assyrian's yoke would be removed from their neck and Assyria would be destroyed.

Isaiah intermingles prophecies of Christ with his warnings to Israel and Judah because he seemed, more than most of the prophets, to understand exactly how God was going to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through this casting of Israel out of the land. We'll discuss this more later.

He tells us a rod shall come forth out of the stem of Jesse (David) and a Branch (Christ) shall grow out of his roots. He shall judge with righteousness and equity and the earth, including the wild animals, shall be at complete peace. The nations shall seek this root of Jesse and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as wa-

ters that cover the sea. At that time, God will, for the second time, recover the remnant of His people (Israel and Judah). Isa. 11:12 tells us He **"shall assemble the outcast of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."**

We have already seen how aptly the term "outcast" fits Israel and we will later see that the term "dispersed" is the correct term for what happens to Judah.

Isaiah also gives us a look at some of the nations and cities around Israel. While we haven't studied Babylon's very important part in our story yet, Isaiah looks ahead and tells us that when Babylon has completed the job God has planned for her, God will bring the Medes against them and they cannot be bought off. The city of Babylon shall be destroyed, never to be inhabited again; the Arab won't even pitch his tent on the ruins. God promises mercy to Jacob and says He will yet choose Israel and set them in their own land and she will take captive her captors and rule over them. Hell, or the grave, is prepared for the king of Babylon, whom he calls Lucifer because of his attempt to exalt his throne above the stars of God; **"I (king of Babylon) will be like the most high."** (Isa. 14:14) Yet, God says he will be brought to hell (grave) and be totally cut off, or have no posterity. (We will see later, as we study the book of Daniel, which king all this refers to.)

The Assyrian will be broken by God also and his yoke will depart from off the shoulders of His people. Isa. 14:26 says, **"This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth:"** and verse 27 says, **"For the LORD of hosts hast purposed and who shall disannul it?"**

We are in the year that King Ahaz died, at this point, which is about 140 years before the Babylonian captivity of Judah takes place.

Coming back to Israel, in chapter 24 Isaiah says God is going to empty the land. All will go, one's position or riches will not matter. However, Isaiah says that when God does empty the land, there shall be a remnant lift up their voice in praise from the isles of the sea. (Keep statements like this in mind for later reference.)

He again repeats the theme of Israel going into captivity, later Jerusalem also going into captivity and the ultimate re-gathering with the LORD of hosts reigning in Mt. Zion.

We need to point out that the words “earth” and “land” are used interchangeably in chapter 24. Keep in mind that God has told Israel, **“you only have I known”** and it is only Israel and Judah that have received God’s laws. So only Israel and Judah can be held accountable for transgressing this law which **“the inhabitants of the earth”** are accused of in verse 5. We can be safe to conclude that in referring to earth, Isaiah is referring to the lands of Israel and Judah, not the whole earth.

In Isa. 25:6 he says, **“In this mountain (kingdom-ed.) shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things,”** and then in verse 8, **“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.”**

In Isa. 28, God declares woe against the leadership of Israel (crown of pride, i.e. Samaria) and of Judah. He tells them through Isaiah that he is bringing a mighty and strong one (Assyria) against them. But Isaiah is mocked as though he was speaking to small children saying his words are, **“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”** The prophet turns their words back on them telling them that because this is all the word of the LORD means to them, they are going to be ensnared and taken.

He then says of the leaders in Jerusalem that because they have been unwilling to learn God’s word, they have made a covenant with death and an agreement with hell (or grave). But God has laid a foundation; a stone in Zion, a reference to Christ. Because of this stone, their covenant with death and their agreement with hell shall not stand. God’s work will be done—they are warned not to be mockers. We will see as we study on into the New Testament that God’s ultimate purpose is for all men to be in His rest. It is

through Christ that this will happen, even to those leaders who have refused to learn and live God’s way here.

Our time frame now is before the third captivity by the Assyrians. Israel itself is already in captivity. So what Isaiah has to say to Jerusalem and Judah, for the most part, is warning them of this upcoming attack by Assyria. He continues by crying a woe against Ariel (Jerusalem) and then against Judah. In both woes he first gives the bad, the result of their sin; then the good, the result of God’s mercy. He says God will defend Jerusalem against the Assyrians and the Assyrians will flee. Then he cries woe against those who come against Jerusalem. He likens God to a burning fire and in effect asks, “Who shall stand up to it?” Those who are righteous is the answer. God is judge, lawgiver and king; (Isa. 33:22)

Isaiah shifts his attention momentarily to Idumea (Edom) telling of its destruction and it being inhabited by wild beasts, thorns, weeds, etc. He tells us God has done it and none can change it.

Isaiah tells us the wilderness and the solitary place will be glad for Israel. He refers to Israel as the ransomed of the LORD and the redeemed. It is important to remember this as we find Israel being redeemed (purchased) by God out of Egypt and we’re told they will be redeemed again. We’ll discuss this more later. But when they are redeemed, Isaiah says they shall flourish in the wilderness.

To bring ourselves up to date, we need to go back to II Chronicles 32 and II Kings 18 and proceed with the story. In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came and took all the fenced cities of Judah except Jerusalem, although he sent his top general against it. This general, Rabshakah, apparently thought it would be a snap, and as he approached the city, Hezekiah sent three representatives out to talk to him. Rabshakah belittled them and blasphemed God and told them he would take their surrender if they presented him with a gift. Hezekiah prayed for deliverance and God answered him through Isaiah who told him Assyria

only had the power God gave them and He would turn them back with a hook in their nose. God then killed 185,000 of the Assyrians as they slept that night. Sennacherib had to return to Ninevah where he was killed by his own sons. Isaiah relates this same story in his 36th and 37th chapters.

After this, Hezekiah became very sick and was told by Isaiah he was going to die. Hezekiah turned to God in prayer which God heard and, through Isaiah, promised Hezekiah that He would add 15 years to his life. As a sign to Hezekiah that He would do this, God brought the shadow of the sun dial back ten degrees, thus extending the day.

Word reached Babylon of Hezekiah's illness and the king of Babylon sent a delegation with a letter and a present to Hezekiah. Because of their kindness, Hezekiah made a serious mistake and showed the delegation everything of value and importance in his kingdom. Isaiah went to Hezekiah and asked him about the delegation and was told who they were and what he had done. Isaiah then prophesied the day would come when the king of Babylon would come to Jerusalem and take everything Hezekiah had shown this delegation plus Hezekiah's own descendants. However, God said it wouldn't happen in Hezekiah's lifetime.

To this point, Isaiah has been warning Israel and the majority of Judah of the coming Assyrian captivities, plus he has warned Jerusalem that though they are escaping the Assyrian captivity, they will later be taken captive by the Babylonians. Now that Israel and the majority of Judah are in captivity, Isaiah's message changes from warning to advising the people in captivity as to what they are to do now. While he has been talking to both Israel and Judah up to this point, his attention now turns primarily to Israel. We will begin here next issue to see how his message changes. JRL

BAPTISM

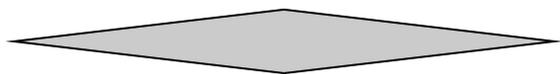
We concluded our article last issue with some questions that came from our local Bible study group when we studied this subject. I would like to continue with another question or two before we proceed. I need to point out that the answers to these questions are my opinion as I do not find specific answers in Scripture.

Does it make any difference what kind of water or where the water is? The principle we saw of the ceremonial washings in the Old Testament suggest moving, or living water. However, I don't believe it critical that it be in a baptistery, a river, or lake, etc. Again, if we get too concerned about such details, we begin to worship the ritual rather than the reason for it.

What is the proper mode of baptism, sprinkling, emersion, or pouring? The word "baptism" certainly suggests dipping or emersion. While this is the mode I prefer, I cannot condemn sprinkling or pouring. Most of the stories concerning baptism in the New Testament refer to emersion, but Acts 2:41 suggests that three thousand were baptized in one day in Jerusalem. Water being in as short a supply as I think it was in Jerusalem, I have a question in my mind that there would have been sufficient water to immerse three thousand there in one day.

Who can baptize? Again, I feel we would be worshipping the ritual if we limited it to only a preacher or priest. Certainly the one doing the baptizing should be a Christian, but I see no problem with fathers baptizing children, husbands baptizing wives, friends baptizing friends, etc. Certainly it is a responsibility of preachers, priests, etc, but I don't believe it is exclusively so.

Keep in mind that the important thing is ones commitment. There are a couple more scriptures that we need to look at before we conclude our discussion of water baptism. The first one I want to look at is I Peter 3:20-21. Here Peter compares baptism with the experience Noah and the flood. If we look at what happened in Noah's



time, he was saved by the water, the same water that destroyed everybody else. The difference was that Noah committed to obedience. When God told him to build the ark, he built it. When told by God to get on the ark, Noah got on it. As a result he and his family was saved. In verse 21, Peter says, **“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** The word translated “answer” actually means “inquiry or seeking.” While we are actually saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, baptism indicates a good conscience that is inquiring or seeking God. So because one is seeking God and is baptized to publically, or outwardly indicate that seeking, he or she is assured of salvation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Noah had not believed and committed himself to obey God, the ark would have done him no good. If we do not believe and commit ourselves to obey God, baptism is of no value to us.

A verse that is confusing to many, and, I believe, is badly misused by some denominations is I Cor. 15:29. I ask that you read the complete 15th chapter. If you do, I believe you will agree that the theme of the chapter is resurrection. In the first 12 verses, Paul is giving proof that Christ was indeed resurrected. There were those who were teaching then, as now, that He was not resurrected but was, or is still dead. In verses 13-19 Paul is saying that if He is not resurrected then Paul is a false witness and those who have already died are perished and we are yet in our sins. Verse 19, **“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”** Then in verses 20-21, Paul makes a very positive statement, **“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”** He digresses in verses 22-28 to explain the order of resurrection and the taking up of the rulership of the kingdom by Christ. Then he picks up the thought he was expressing in verses 20-21 in verse 29, **“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?**

why are they then baptized for the dead? He continues the same thought in verse 30, **“And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?”** Verses 22-28 are appropriate and necessary but we have to not let them break the chain of thought Paul was having. He is making the statement that Christ is risen and by His resurrection comes the resurrection of man. Otherwise, he asks, skipping to verse 29, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead (i.e. Christ if He wasn’t resurrected) if the dead (Christ) rise not at all? Then he asks, why are they then baptized for the dead (Christ if he was still dead) and why do people like Paul stand in jeopardy every hour for preaching that Christ was resurrected? The fact that Paul was standing in jeopardy and that people were being baptized into Christ was part of the proof Paul felt proved that Jesus was resurrected. So the dead here is Christ, if he has not been resurrected. It does not mean that any of us should be baptized as stand-ins for someone who is dead. Again, baptism in and of itself does not save you or anybody else. Keep in mind that water baptism is a part of sanctification. We’ll see a little later why this is important.

There are at least 2, or maybe 3, more baptisms spoken of in Scripture. We probably should have looked at this next one, we want to discuss, first that we might keep things in better order. In Matt. 20 and Mark 10, the mother of James and John is asking Christ to grant that her two sons would sit one on the left and the other on the right of Jesus in His kingdom. Jesus answers them in Matt. 20:22-23, **“Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”** Jesus makes the statement in Luke 12:50, **“But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened (“pained” in the margin) till it be accomplished!”**

I think most of us would agree He is speaking of His sacrifice on the cross as a baptism. In Matt. 26:28, during the last supper and referring to the wine cup, Jesus says, **“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”** Then in verse 39, praying in the garden of Gethsemane He said, **“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”** and then in verse 42, **“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”** We read of the actual spilling, or pouring out of His blood in John 19:32-34, **“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”**

Water was the anointing agent of the baptism we previously discussed. I think it safe to say that the anointing agent of this baptism is blood. Looking back at the order we were given in the tabernacle in the wilderness, Ex. 29:20 tells us that in consecration of the priests, **“Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar around about.”** Then verse 21 tells us they were to all be sprinkled with the blood.

Lev. 16:14, speaking of the sin offering, says, **“And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, (the sin offering for the high priest himself) and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward: and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.”** Then of the goat which was the sin offering for the people, Moses writes in verse 15, **“Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mer-**

cy seat.” The blood was the atonement agent, or medium that the high priest was to use to atone for, or cover the sins of the children of Israel. Christ, in offering the ultimate sin sacrifice, also had to spill His blood and He is calling this a baptism with the agent being blood.

In Lev. 14 we find directions dealing with the cleansing of one of leprosy. Leprosy is often considered a symbol for sin. In this light, there is another parallel in Lev. 14. Starting with verse 5, **“And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven time, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.”**

In each of these examples there has been a “baptism” in blood associated with the atoning for, or removal of sin. Now, Jesus told James and John that they would drink of the cup He would drink of and be baptized with the baptism He would be baptized with, but this doesn’t mean they too would be sin sacrifices themselves, but rather their baptism in blood would be a witness to that perfect baptism in blood in which Jesus took part. We call these people martyrs. The Greek word we get the word “martyr” from means witness. When someone is killed because of their belief in and profession of Christ, they are indeed witnesses to Christ’s sacrifice.

In Lev. 17, God instructs Israel to not eat blood. He gives His reason in verse 14, **“For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.”** The word “soul” comes from the same word that “life” is translated from, so soul could be substituted for the word “life.” But the point is that blood sacrifice is saying life sacrifice. Speaking of Christ, Isaiah says in Isa. 53:12, **“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall di-**

vide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul (life or blood) unto death.”

I suggest reading all of Rom. 3, but I would like to quote starting with verse 23, **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”** Going then to chapt. 4, verse 22, speaking of Abraham, **“And therefore it was imputed (reckoned) to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”**

The blood baptism which Christ went through was for our justification or being made righteous. We’ve determined the laver experience, or water baptism which we physically do is to our sanctification. This blood baptism, or altar experience, which we accept as done for us then is to our justification.

We have at least one more baptism that we will look at next issue. JRL

ASIA MINOR-TURKEY

In our look at the countries of Asia Minor during New Testament times, this issue we want to look at Cilicia. If you recall, we are starting on the eastern side of Asia Minor and working our way west. We first looked at Cappadocia, then at Pontus on the north side of Cappadocia. Cilicia is on the south side on the shores of the Mediterranean. Geographically, Cilicia is naturally divided into two parts, Cilicia Trachea (rugged Cilicia)

which is the mountainous area to the west, and Cilicia Pedias (flat Cilicia) which is the flat coastal area to the east. The mountainous area is part of the Taurus mountains which forms the northern and western borders of the country. These mountains often terminate on the coast in rocky headlands with small sheltered harbors. The flat coastal area has very fertile soil and is well watered by the Cydnus, the Sarus, and the Pyramus rivers and today is filled with cotton, grain, olive, and orange crops. The Amanus mountains on the east separate Cilicia from Syria.

There was long a road that came down from the Anatolian Plateau through what is called the Cilician Gate, a pass through the Taurus mountains, and went through Tarsus and on east where it split and went both north and east through some smaller Syrian Gates, or passes in the Amanus mountains into Syria and Armenia. Tarsus was the birth place of the Apostle Paul and was one of the major cities of Cilicia.

Cilicia was part of the Hittite Empire until its fall after 1215 BC. It then became a part of a new kingdom called Tarhuntassa until the Assyrians discovered the region in the 9th century BC. They conquered the flat coastal area first. Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III (744 -727 BC) conquered it and appointed a governor over the area, but after the death of Sargon II in 705 BC, the area became independent again only to be reconquered again by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680 - 669 BC). The western area, called Hilakku by the Assyrians (from which the name Cilicia is derived), remained independent until the middle 600’s BC when the Cimmerians threatened the area, having already overrun Armenia. (Recall that the Cimmerians were one group of the Israelites who had been captive to the Assyrians but who had moved out of the land of their captivity and started migrating west.) When this happened, Hilakku placed itself under Assyrian protection.

However, the Assyrian Empire collapsed in 612 when the Babylonians and the Medes joined forces to capture Ninevah, the capital of Assyria. Hilakku survived this collapse and was united with the coastal area to form a new king-

Turkey Today



dom which remained independent until around 547BC when Cyrus the Great, the Persian king, began to campaign west of the Tigris River. Though Cilicia retained some degree of independence, it had to pay tribute to Persia which used Cilicia as a place to assemble armies to fight the Greeks.

Alexander the Great conquered Cilicia in 333 BC. After his death, Cilicia was first divided between 2 of his generals but eventually all of Cilicia came under the Seleucid part of the Greek Empire.

As the Seleucid power began to wane, the inhabitants of western Cilicia began to behave as pirates, an occupation well suited to the small sheltered harbors of the area. Finally, in 67 BC, the Roman general, Pompey the Great attacked these pirates and resettled them in towns and gave them land. It wasn't until 50 BC however that the

last of these independent Cilicians were totally defeated by Cicero. Within another 25 years Cilicia became a part of the Roman Empire. This was its status during New Testament times.

It remained a part of the Roman Empire then until the time of the Crusades, though it was divided by different Emperors, reunited only to be divided again and then re-divided. However, during the Crusades, it became a united independent nation again. This last period of independence came to an end in 1375 when the area became a part of the Ottoman Empire.

As we know with the other countries we have been looking at, the Ottoman Empire came to an end after World War I and the area known as Cilicia, along with the other countries of Asia Minor became a part of what we know today as the nation of Turkey. JRL