

Pathetic Priests, Princes & Prophets

Joe Slater

Three groups that ought to have led Judah in loving and serving the Lord took them in the opposite direction instead. First were the priests. Called by God to be models of holiness, they *“violated My law and profaned My holy things”* to the extent that God Himself was treated irreverently (Ezekiel 22:26).

Next were the princes, who behaved *“like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain”* (v. 27). Just being in the royal family gave them automatic advantage, but that wasn't enough! Rather than seeking the prosperity of the common people and helping them to know God, these predators saw them as prey to be slaughtered and their meager possessions consumed.

Third, *“Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ when the Lord had not spoken”* (v. 28). Untempered mortar might look pretty, but the stones won't adhere to each other and the structure will fall. The kingdom of Judah would collapse because the people believed their false prophets who substituted lovely-sounding lies for the powerful word of the omnipotent God.

Today, most religious leaders professing Christianity will, at best, pay lip-service to the Bible as the inspired, authoritative word of almighty God. A shocking number view it as nothing more than an outdated piece of ancient literature. Government officials have exchanged real “public service” for personal enrichment from the treasury, the most pressing concern being victory in the next election. And yes, fake prophets still bilk millions from naïve victims.

Ezekiel wrote 2500+ years ago. But, as the saying goes, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” Let us revere God and strive to keep His word!

A Christian Without the Church?

Many folks today take the view that they can be believers, even Christians, without participating with the church and her functions. They claim that the church has become “institutionalized”, caring only for its million-dollar buildings that are filled with hypocritical members. But truth be known, a person who makes such a statement is probably seeking justification for their personal decision not to participate with the worship and work of the body of Christ. To those who make such assertions, we offer the following scriptural guidance:

- Jesus died for the church, He purchased it with His blood. (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28)
- Jesus Christ is the Savior of the church (the body). (Eph. 5:23)
- The Lord adds the saved to the church, to be separated from the church is to be separated from the saved. (Acts 2:47)
- The Lord provides spiritual nourishment to the church and He treasures her. One who has nothing to do with the church will miss this. (Eph. 5:29)
- God gave Jesus Christ to be the head of the church. (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18) If one is not in the church, one is not under the Headship of Christ.
- God seeks worshipers to worship Him in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)
- Praising God takes place by singing collectively with the church. (Heb. 2:12; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19)
- Believers must meet together (Heb. 10:24-27). If one purposely neglects meeting with other believers, there's no longer a sacrifice for sins.
- Within the church, love, edification, comfort and support are shared. (Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:29; 1 Thes. 5:11; Gal. 6:2)

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

WOULD YOU BE MISSED?

After completing many years as a journalist, Arthur Brisbane was offered six months of paid vacation by William Randolph Hearst, the publisher of the San Francisco Examiner. Brisbane refused to accept the kind offer for two reasons. He said, “If I quit writing my news column for six months it might affect the circulation of the newspaper. The second reason is that it might not affect the circulation of the newspaper.”

Mr. Brisbane's answer was profound. In view of his answer, let us ask ourselves, “If I dropped out of sight for six months and did absolutely nothing for the Lord, would I be missed? Would Lord's work suffer, or would there be no difference whatsoever?” As members of the Lord's church, we each have a responsibility in the Lord's work and in building up the body of Christ – Ephesians 4:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; 1 Corinthians 14:26; 2 Corinthians 12:19. We cannot hire someone else to fulfill our responsibilities to the Lord – Galatians 6:4, 5, 6; Romans 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:8. We are individually accountable to God for what we do with the time He has blessed us with. Let us hear the inspired writer, Paul, as he writes to the Ephesians brethren, *“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best of the time, because the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5:15, 16).

Brethren, let us resolve from this day forward, that we will become more involved in the Lord's work, *“And let us consider how we may spur one another toward love and good deeds”* (Hebrews 10:24). God has so richly blessed us with time, talent, vision and resources. Let us be willing to put these gifts to work for the Lord and His cause, *“while it is yet day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* (John 9:4).

--Mike Riley (Cave City, AR)