

Jezeel: God Scatters, God Sows

Joe Slater

The name Jezeel was shared by a city, a plain, and a valley. Israel's wicked King Ahab and his treacherous wife, Jezebel, had a royal residence in the city of Jezeel, which was located on the plain. And Jezeel was the location of Naboth's vineyard, which Ahab acquired when Jezebel had Naboth murdered.

Evidently Jezeel was good for agriculture, for the name itself means "God scatters" or "God sows." Scattering may be good or bad. In ancient times, a man sowed his grain field by scattering seed over its surface (think of Jesus' parable of the sower). That's good. But God warned His people in Leviticus 26:33 that if they persisted in disobedience to His commands, he would scatter them among the nations. That kind of scattering is anything but good!

God told the prophet Hosea to name his firstborn son Jezeel because He was about to "*bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel*" (Hosea 1:4). True to His word, the Lord would scatter His wayward children among the Gentiles as He allowed the Assyrians to carry them away as captives.

Wouldn't it be depressing if that were the end of the story? But it isn't! In His infinite mercy and grace, God would restore His people to their homeland. He would send rain from the heavens, and "*the earth will answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezeel (God sows). Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'*" (Hosea 2:22-23).

God scatters. Whether that scattering is productive (as in sowing seed) or destructive (as in casting away) depends entirely on whether we are faithful to Him.

YOU CAN'T DO BOTH

A little boy listened as his Bible class teacher related the story of the rich man and Lazarus. She explained how comfortably the rich man lived—eating and dressing very well. In contrast, she described poor Lazarus covered with sores, desiring the crumbs from the rich man's table. She continued by telling that both men died. The rich man went to torment and Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. When she completed this Bible story, the teacher asked the class, "Which man would you rather be?" The lad who had listened so carefully quickly replied, "I would rather be the rich man while I live, then be Lazarus when I die."

The Bible makes it quite clear that we must face God in the judgment just as we have lived. One cannot live a goat's life, then be among the sheep in judgment (Matthew 25:32-33). Paul plainly states that "*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*" (II Corinthians 5:10). Twice in Revelation twenty, John, in describing the judgment scene, states that the dead were judged "*according to their works.*" In a related passage Paul writes, "*For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*" (Gal. 6:7, 8). One cannot sow to the flesh and reap of the Spirit: he cannot live like the rich man and die like Lazarus. You can't do both!

--Walter Buchanan (via Sayre, OK)

JUNK OR JEWEL? (The Pinky Bates Story)

If you are where I was a few years ago, your self-worth is below the floor; but don't give up! You still awaken to the fact that God made you and loves **all** that He creates. "*God saw everything He had made and it was very good*" (Genesis 1:31).

Hi, friend! My name's Pinky. Yes, that **is** my real name (like a boy named Sue). This face beat up a lot of fists. I grew up fighting. My life was, as Johnny Cash sang, "in the mud, the blood, and the beer"!

I clearly recall fights over my name as early as First Grade. However, by God's grace, coupled with loving Christian friends and a willingness to let God keep working on me, I no longer fight over my name. My name really is easy to remember. Pinky is just a servant of God, and my battle for respect is over. "*I can do all things through Christ Who gives me strength*" (Philippians 4:13).

My life has been, and is, blessed by God as I struggle to serve Him rather than my selfish desires. I am a grateful recovering alcoholic, drug addict, and ex-offender with 38 years of insanity, pain, and shame under the bridge. In 1977 I was serving time in the Walls Unit (Huntsville, TX) where Buck Griffith came to see me. Buck was my only visitor. I'll never forget his words: "Don't give up. God can still use you."

Many years have passed. Like Job, I had heard the Lord before, but I sure do see Him now (Job 42:5). He walks with me today. He talks with me. He gives direction to my feet, heart, and mind.

(To Be Continued Next Week)