

The Keys Of The Kingdom

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Our Writing Staff



Jim Miller

Jim Miller: Preacher at the Gray, church of Christ semi-retired, publisher, writer, editor. A member of the Lords church since 1985. Preached in NC, TN, KY, and Maine. Two years Co-hosting Bible Talk Radio. Owner of Keys Of The Kingdom magazine and website.



Michael Hatcher

Michael Hatcher: Preacher Bellview Church of Christ <http://www.bellviewcoc.com> August 1994 to present · Pensacola, Florida. Preacher of the Gospel since the mid 1970s. Preached for the Bellview Church of Christ since 1994. While with Bellview, edited monthly publication "Defender," and weekly bulletin "Beacon." Directed the Bellview Annual Lectureship since 1995 along with editing the book of the lectures.



Dub McClish

H. W. (Dub) McClish: Preached first sermon in June 1954 at Boise, Idaho, at age 16. After 35 years of work as local preacher in 5 states (the last 12 years of which were with the Pearl St. Congregation, Denton, TX), began work under oversight of Pearl Street elders in 1992, devoting time to combined works of Gospel meetings, mission trips, and lectureships and to writing and editing sound Biblical materials.



Jerry Brewer

Jerry Brewer was born in Childress, Texas in 1941 and was baptized into Christ by O. M. Curry in 1954. He attended the Elk City, Okla. School of Preaching, directed by W. R. Craig, in 1969-70 and has done local work in Oklahoma and Texas. He has made three trips to Kenya to preach and teach in the Kalamindi School of Preaching. He currently preaches for the Northeast church of Christ in Elk City, Okla., where he has been for 19 years. He has authored a commentary on Galatians, and formerly published "The Gospel Preceptor," a monthly paper. He is married to the former Sherlene Holley of Carter, Okla. They have six children, and 17 grandchildren.

If you would like to be a guest writer for TKOK you may contact me at jfmiller61@gmail.com.

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May God Bless You. Jim and the Staff

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Life's Trials

Jim Miller
Gray, Maine

There are many things in life we can not control. You can't stand out in your yard in the rain and shout for it to stop and expect it to happen. You can't control

what others say whether it is good or bad. You can't change the seasons just because you don't like winter. You can't stop friends and family from passing away when it is their time. And you can't make others love you or care for you no matter how hard you try.

But, what if we were to pay closer attention to those things we do have power over? What if we treated people the way we want to be treated regardless of how they treated us? What if instead of lashing out in anger we held our tongues in check? What if we stopped trying to control everything and looked to God for the answer?

I am not sure why but people seem to want to demand everything go their way. Is it not a sin to be selfish? To think so highly of ourselves or to make ourselves the victim in every circumstance we are in? We so easily become slaves to sin rather than servants of God the Master of all.

Part of being a Christian is learning to accept things you can not change knowing that there is a reason for everything that happens even if we do not understand it. There are going to be trials and tribulations throughout one's life here on this earth we can choose to let them defeat us or we can choose to trust in God and overcome them. We can choose to wallow in our misery or we can pick ourselves up dust ourselves off and move forward.

There isn't a Christian around that hasn't asked God how much more does He think they can bare? I know I have many times. Yet here I am still facing things that are out of my control and all I can do is trust in the Lord to see me through. It is that faith in God that comforts me during the difficult times in life. Knowing that God sees it all and that one day if I remain obedient and faithful all this will be over and He will bring me home to be with Him at the end of time.

We have to keep our eyes on the prize we have to endure the struggles and hardships of life knowing it is but temporary and that one day we will have true and lasting peace. It has been said many times that there is nothing on this earth worth losing your soul for, and this is true. If any one of us lost all they had would we not still be rich beyond measure because we have a loving God who cares for us in good times and bad.

Folks we can't stay caught up placing our hope in the things of this world. The older I have gotten the more I understand the words of Paul who said he had

learned to both abound and to be abased and that he had learned to be content in whatever situation he found himself. Paul placed his trust in God as we should be doing. Php 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. What comforting words and what a great attitude we see in Paul.

I have found great comfort in the scriptures and the promises of God. We are truly blessed beyond measure. In Philippians chapter four and verses four through seven it says..... Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

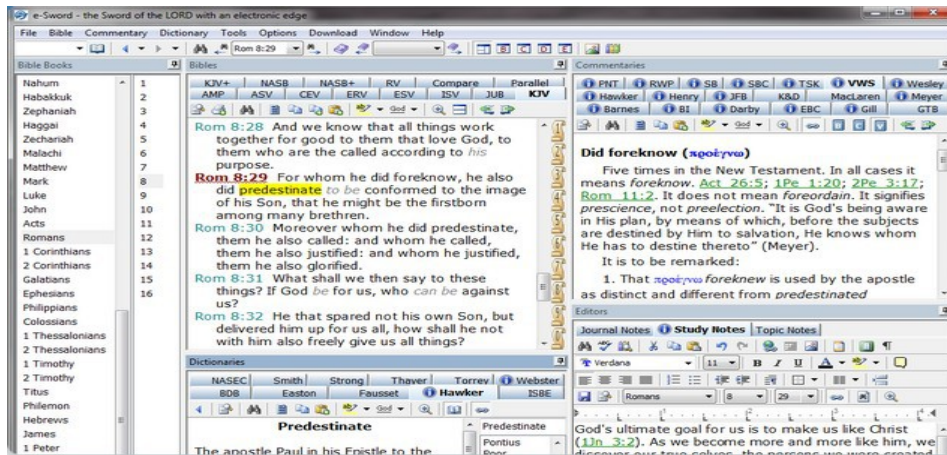
What a precious promise is made to us in Heb 13:5-6 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

We often fail to remember to turn to God and be thankful when things are going well for us. However, we must remember that we are to be grateful and thankful to God at all times. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (Rom 5:1-4)

We are going to face many trials and tribulations the question now is..... How will we face them?

Till Next We Meet
God Bless

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This is a new website created to expose the Compromised/liberal teaching institutions that claim affiliation with the church. The following is from our home page and you will find a link to the site at the end.

The Shipwreck of Colleges and Schools of Preaching
For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3).

Why and how did compromise and/or liberalism come to dominate the preaching schools and colleges of today? This Site is dedicated to trying to answer these questions while showing that (1) compromise and liberalism have already destroyed the “Big Gun” Colleges and (2) the way that compromise is having a devastating effect on our smaller schools of preaching. These smaller schools, begun by congregations to replace the colleges that went off headlong into error, are now teetering on the edge because of their compromises.

There was a time when men who were sound in the faith taught younger men in the church how to preach and teach. We believe this should still be the norm. However, as sadly seen in these institutions today, this is no longer the case. Most people in the congregations have been dumbed down to the point that they believe that unless a preacher has a piece of paper stating he has been trained formally, he is unable or unfit to preach. Read the rest on our site.

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The Book of Micah—A Brief Commentary

Part 2

*Dub McClish
Denton, Texas*

Chapter 2:12–13: In the very midst of these prophecies of doom and calamity, Micah issued a hope-filled promise. The general and immediate meaning of these verses is that although God would cause their enemies to overwhelm and displace them to a strange land, the remnant of them would one day be called forth by God and returned to their land. The particulars of verse 12 involve the following: This promise would involve all of Jacob's being put together once more, thus a reuniting of Israel and Judah. Bozrah (in Edom), famed for its vast flocks of sheep, indicates a large gathering, as does the great noise they would make. "The breaker" (v. 13) is likely descriptive of God, who would break open the gate of their captors and lead them out, clearing the way as would a king who would "pass before them."

Since the immediate context of chapters 1 and 2 prophesies the fall of Samaria to Assyria and of Jerusalem to Babylon and the respective displacements that followed them, it would seem unnatural not to primarily apply this promised return to that of the exiles to Canaan. This began with the God-inspired encouragement of Cyrus the Persian in 536 B.C. (Ezra 1:1–3). This return would include not only those of Judah, but those of Israel, who would be once more one people. Jeremiah distinctly promised this very thing relative to the return of the captives (Jer. 31:1–28). While part of the captivity in Babylon, Ezekiel once took two sticks and placed them together in one hand to graphically prophesy the reunification of the separate states (Eze. 37:15–22).³ Thus, when Micah declared that all of Jacob would be put back together (v. 12) we see the fulfillment in the return of the captives. It was God who allowed them to "break up, pass through, and go out of" the gate of captivity by ordering Cyrus to send the captives home and build Him a house in Jerusalem (2 Chr. 36:22–23; Ezra 1:2–3).

It is quite possible that Micah 1:12–13 have Messianic overtones as well. The reference to assembling all of Jacob and the remnant of Israel could well refer to the preaching of the Gospel by which Christ called (and calls) His people out of the captivity of sin and into His kingdom of spiritual Israel (Rom. 2:28–29; 6:17–18; Eph. 4:8; 2 The. 2:13–14). Christ has brought all nations together in one body through the cross (Eph. 2:16–19), thus He would be the “Breaker” “... who breaks down the wall of sin that separated them from the Lord and made them bondsmen.”⁴

Denunciation of Evils and Messianic Promises

(3:1–5:15)

Chapter 3:1–4: These words of condemnation are addressed to the heads and princes of the people. They are derided for not knowing the meaning of judgment or justice when they are entrusted with exercising it (v. 1). They had totally reversed their values, hating good and loving evil. They had become so rapacious in robbing and defrauding the people that they are compared to cannibals feasting on the flesh of their fellows (vv. 2–3). In the trials which would come upon these evil rulers God would turn his face and ears away from plight because of their wickedness (v. 4).

Chapter 3:5–8: This paragraph is an outcry against false prophets. They caused error among the people by their false teaching which wounded its victims as if bitten by the false prophets, all the while posing as messengers of peace. They would make war against those who did not support them (v. 5). The doom of these bearers of error is described as the night and darkness with no word from God (vv. 6–7). So shall it eventually be with all purveyors of religious error. In contrast, Micah was full of God’s Spirit, of judgment, of power to faithfully convey God’s message of condemnation to Israel (v. 8).

Chapter 3:9–12: In this section Micah denounces prince, judge, priest, and prophet (v. 9) and graphically describes Jerusalem’s destruction. The princes were condemned as those who had built Jerusalem upon the blood money of their victims (v. 10). The judges sought bribes, and the priests and prophets worked only for money, yet foolishly thought God would forever protect them (v. 11). Not so! The day would come when their evils would be avenged in the leveling of Jerusalem (v. 12). This is the very verse that caused the life of

Jeremiah to be spared when he was making similar pronouncements of doom against Jerusalem a century later (Jer. 9:11; 26:18). Nebuchadnezzar would leave it no better than a heap of rubble after his siege and conquest in 586 B.C. (v. 12). While God's judgment against corruption in government or religion is not always immediate, it is no less certain and severe!

Chapter 4:1–8: This paragraph interrupts the message of judgment upon Jerusalem with one of great hope and promise. As discussed in the introduction, verses 1–3 are almost identical with Isaiah 2:2–4. This prophecy is the most beautiful, detailed, and incontrovertible description of the establishment of the church of Christ to be found in Holy Writ, and it is found not once, but twice. Little wonder the devil, through unbelieving skeptics, does his best to discredit these sublime and significant verses!

In the latter days (last days, KJV) or literally, at the end of the days (v. 1a), marks a time frame. It may mean the last days of the Jewish dispensation or it may refer to the last dispensation (the present Christian Age) as a whole. In either case, the actual time is the same since the end of the former marked the beginning of the latter. This is an unmistakable reference to the time of the Messiah. “At the end of the days’...always denotes the Messianic era when used by the prophets....”⁵ The first Pentecost after the resurrection of the Christ is identified by Peter as the time referred to in this phrase, although he quoted it from Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:16–17).

The mountain of Jehovah's house... (v. 1b) is a reference to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem on which the temple then stood. It represented the presence, worship, and religion of God. The previous verse (3:12) had told of the utter destruction of the literal “mountain of the house” then standing. It would be replaced with one far better and more exalted, and its place of establishment would be Jerusalem. This phrase can refer to nothing but the kingdom of the Christ, His church, the establishment of which was the outcome of the events on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:47).

And people shall flow unto it (v. 1c). This statement points to the universal nature of the Lord's house. Isaiah's wording is a bit plainer: “And all nations shall flow unto it” (2:2). The first phrase of the next verse (4:2) proves this to be

Micah's meaning. Nations is the common Old Testament word for Gentiles. The Gospel and the religion of Christ were to be for all the nations, all the world, the whole creation (Mat. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47), in contrast with the national restrictions of Judaism. Thus on Pentecost, Peter declared that the promise included not only those to whom he then spoke (Jews), but also "to all that are afar off" (Gentiles) (Acts 2:39).

In this new age and with this new religion men of many nations would seek salvation of the God of Jacob and in His house (v. 2a). They would understand that they must go to Him to receive knowledge of His will. The religion of Christ would be (is) one that would (does) require men to learn and understand the Truth of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17; John 6:45). The church is the dispenser of the Gospel to the world (1 Tim. 3:15).

The Law/Word of the Lord would proceed from Zion/Jerusalem (v. 2b). This promise foretells the sending forth of the Gospel and specifies that it would go forth from Jerusalem when the new order was set up. This is precisely what occurred on Pentecost when the Gospel was first preached in Jerusalem, resulting in the establishment of the church of the Lord (Acts 2:14–47). Jesus specified Jerusalem as the beginning place for taking the Gospel to the world (Luke 24:46–47; Acts 1:8).

It is worthy of note (for the benefit of those who deny that Christ has any spiritual Law which we must obey) that Micah described the Gospel as "the law." In the events recorded in Acts 2—and only in those events—are all the necessary features found to fulfill this remarkable manifold prophecy, uttered some seven centuries years before its fulfillment. Further, none can read this prophecy and properly apply it and still allege that the church is only an afterthought, a substitute, an emergency-necessitated institution, not originally planned, but "hatched up" in a moment to operate in the place of the alleged "failed" kingdom of Christ. God's "eternal purpose" for man's redemption included the church (Eph. 3:9–11).

Micah depicts Christ as final judge and arbiter of all questions (v. 3a), which authority is exercised through His written Word. His kingdom will not be advanced by fighting armies and carnal weapons (v. 3b; cf. John 18:36). Unlike

those in the old kingdom, about to be broken, those in the new kingdom would not need to study or perform military maneuvers anymore. The figure of sitting under the vine and fig tree (v. 4a) connotes peace, safety, and security; none would ever prevail against this new kingdom, not even the “gates of hades” (Mat. 16:18). This promise had all of the integrity of God behind it (v. 4b); it could not and it did not fail.

Micah observed that while those who are not God’s people would go on trusting in their false, dead, and powerless deities, God’s people would walk in the name and by the strength and authority of Jehovah, the true and living God (v. 5a). The empires, institutions, and religions of men come and go, but the church of the Lord would remain and prevail “for ever and ever” (v. 5b). It is “the kingdom which shall never be destroyed, ...and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44). It is “the kingdom which cannot be moved” (Heb. 12:23, 28), which our Savior will at last deliver it safely into the Father’s eternal care (I Cor. 15:24).

In the day when all these wonderful things would occur the Lord would gather even those he was going to afflict and cast out so that they could be accepted into His new kingdom (v. 6). They would be once more a “strong nation” with the Lord as their king in Zion (v. 7). This poetic language seems to be saying that even the rebellious and corrupt stock of Israel would not be cut off from the Messianic kingdom, provided, of course, that they choose to be gathered unto God by obeying Him.

Flock towers (v. 8a) were erected by shepherds from which they could better observe and protect their sheep. Zion/Jerusalem is likened unto such a watchtower as a stronghold, a symbol of safety and strength, from which the Lord would watch over His people. To Zion a kingdom would come that would involve the “first [former] dominion,” which refers to the restoration of the throne of David (8b). This foretells the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David, who was to be given a throne and a kingdom eternal (2 Sam. 7:12–13). These were fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ, “the Son of David” (Mat. 1:6–17), who was raised from the dead, has ascended on high, and has received that throne at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:29–36; Heb. 1:3; cf. Dan. 7:13–14). That everlasting kingdom is His church (Mat. 16:18–19; Col. 1:2, 13; Heb. 12:23, 28; Rev. 1:6; et al.), which was established on Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:36–47).

Chapter 4:9–13: In this final part of the chapter, Micah moved from the glorious events of the future (relative to him) “last days” back to the painful realities of the more immediate present and future circumstances of his people. They would cry aloud as a woman in advanced labor in their pangs of suffering and humiliation as they would be stripped of their king/counsellor (v. 9). The principal source of their pain would be their captivity, during which they would be forced from their homes to live in the fields in the faraway land of Babylon (v. 10a). Here is another absolutely amazing example and proof of Biblical/prophetic inspiration. None but God could know these events of more than a century beyond Micah’s time. These events not only involved the fact of Judah’s captivity, but also that Babylon, which in the time of Micah was little more than a province of Assyria, would be a world power and the place of exile!

Although the terrible travail was once more announced, it was tempered with the corresponding promise of deliverance (10b). I do not see a Messianic application (except perhaps in a remotely typical sense) in this statement, due to the specific reference to Babylon. I rather take it as simply the promise that they would not evermore remain in their impending captivity. As seen earlier (cf. comments on 2:12–13), Cyrus the Persian (at God’s instigation) would end their captivity 70 years after the beginning of the exile (Isa. 44:28; 2 Chr. 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–3).

The nations were watching God’s people, eager to witness their destruction (v. 11). However, it was not God’s plan to destroy, but merely to punish her for her corruption; it was the blood–thirsty nations that would be destroyed like wheat on the threshing–floor (v. 12). Israel (“daughter of Zion”) would be empowered by God to do the threshing of the nations (v. 13a). This is variously understood in reference to (1) the destruction of Sennacherib’s army that would soon surround Jerusalem, (2) the ultimate demise of Assyria and the return of the remnant from captivity, or (3) the Maccabean victories over Syria in the second century B.C. The spoils of whichever conquest is involved in this prophecy would be devoted to the Lord (v. 13b). The judgments and victories described in verses 11–13 would surely typify the spiritual power of spiritual Israel which would be (and now is) exercised through Messiah’s law which issued forth from Zion.

Chapter 5:1–15: The precious gem of this chapter is the announcement of the

birthplace of the Messiah (v. 2). Many commentators suggest that verse 1 actually fits better as the conclusion to chapter 4. Jerusalem was called upon to gather her forces against her besieger who would smite their judge upon the cheek (v. 1). This verse is generally applied to the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., which ended with the humiliation of King Zedekiah (their “judge”), which may be correct. It has at least a typical force (as does 4:11–13), however, in reference to the enemies of Christ who would smite and humiliate Him before crucifying Him (Mat. 26:67–68; John 18:22; 19:1–3; et al.). Indeed, one commentator believes that its primary reference is to Christ and suggests that “judge” should be capitalized to so indicate.⁶ This understanding of verse 1 would admittedly furnish a perfect preface to verse 2.

That verse 2 is primarily and fundamentally Messianic cannot be rationally disputed. Such was the correct understanding of it by the leaders in Judaism who were contemporary with the Lord (Mat. 2:1–6). None other than the Messiah, the Son of David, Shiloh out of Judah (Gen. 49:10) fits the ruler in Israel designation. Ephratah is affixed to Bethlehem lest it be confused with any other town by that name (e.g., Jos. 19:15). Little known even in Judah, Bethlehem would be propelled to unrivaled fame by being the birthplace of the “only begotten from the Father” (John 1:14). His incarnation is declared in that he had not merely a fleshly, temporal origin, but also an eternal one. This prophecy of manifold specifics is another irrefragable evidence of Biblical inspiration.

The next few verses describe some of the works of this “ruler in Israel.” Micah first introduced the figure of a woman in labor to deliver in 4:9–10. There, Micah compared exiled Judah to a woman in birth travail, likely, also the intended application of verse 3 here. The meaning seems to be that God would give Israel up to trial and subjection, yet preserving a remnant of her, until she brought forth the babe in Bethlehem through Mary. Afterward, they would be allowed to become part of the true Israel, the church.

The Christ is depicted as a powerful Shepherd who, by the authority of Jehovah, would feed His flock (v. 4; cf. John 10:11). Micah describes Him as the provider and protector of the peace against all enemies, which enemies were typified by the Assyrians, Israel’s terrible tormentors of the moment (vv. 5–6). The “seven

shepherds, and eight principal men” are likely intended to convey a more-than-adequate defensive force, symbolizing the power of Christ and His all-conquering power in the final Judgment.

Verses 7 and 8 describe activities of “the remnant of Jacob,” which seems to be a figurative term for the Messianic kingdom, the church. She would be a blessing among the nations comparable to the dew and showers in a thirsty land (v. 7). Through Christ the Abrahamic promise is fulfilled that God would bless all the nations through his seed (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16). She would walk among the nations as a powerful force, treading her spiritual enemies underfoot and defeating sin and Satan, cutting off all enemies (vv. 8–9).

Verses 10–15 compose a unit. In that day (v. 10) refers to the day when the Messiah reigns and when the “remnant of Jacob” (the church) prevails. There will be no dependence upon military might and fortresses (vv. 10–11; cf. 4:3), wizards (v. 12), or false gods (vv. 13–14). Those who refuse to submit to the Christ will suffer His awful vengeance of the Judgment (v. 15). True saints will never use carnal weapons to advance the cause, consult astrologers and fortune-tellers, or worship any false god. Woe be unto those Christians who resort to such heathen practices!

The Lord’s Controversy with His People

(6:1–7:20)

Chapter 6:1–5: God challenged Israel to give explanation of her rebellion. He called upon the mountains and hills to witness his controversy with His people (vv. 1–2). He severely condemned Israel for her ingratitude, inviting her to produce any excuses she had for it (v. 3) and then reminded them of numerous times He had delivered and spared them, demonstrating His righteousness (vv. 4–5).

Chapter 6:6–8: These verses give the response of the people to God’s judgment against them. Could they assuage His wrath by coming before Him with animal sacrifices, offerings of oil, or even their most prized possessions, a firstborn child (vv. 6–7)? No! Such outward manifestations of devotion by themselves were quite insufficient. God also demanded wholeness of character, demonstrated in

just, merciful, and humble behavior (v. 8). As the following section will show, these were the very things of which they were bereft, leaving them a people whose corruptions could not be cleansed by mere empty, outward ritual. So it was when the Lord walked the earth, as seen in His denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees (Mat. 23:1–38; et al.). And so it remains to the present.

This passage must not be twisted to imply that God did (does) not desire, command, or accept outward manifestations of devotion to Him. Indeed, he has required these in every age. First, let us understand that this proposal was not made by a people intent on pleasing God. Rather, they were trying to “buy off” God through their sacrifices, so as to continue in their iniquities. Second, just as sacrifice can never be a substitute for obedience (1 Sam. 15:22), neither can man save himself by his own moral goodness apart from appropriating the blood of Christ, God’s perfect sacrifice for sin (Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18–21; et al.). The main point of this passage is that outward acts of worship are vain and hypocritical if not joined with the power of a virtuous life. It is tragic to see some of God’s people even now who have been deceived into believing they can live in worldliness through the week as long as they “go through the motions” of worship on the Lord’s day.

Chapter 6:9–16: This paragraph consists of a statement God’s charges against His people and the reward they will receive for their behavior. Micah depicted his message as the voice of Jehovah, the rod of judgment, crying unto the city (Jerusalem)—a message to which wise men would give heed (v. 9). Through both questions and declarations, God set out His charges against the people. They gained and held their treasures by giving God—despised scant measures, wicked balances, and deceitful weights (vv. 10–11). They had enriched themselves by violence and fraud (v. 12).

Their deserved punishments would sicken them (v. 13). These would involve want, disaster, deprivation, and utter humiliation (vv. 14–15). Moses warned of these very curses some 800 years before the time of Micah as the rewards of rebellion against God’s law, including the fact that they would be led captive into a foreign land (Deu. 28:29–45).

The statutes of Omri and the works of the house of Ahab (v. 16) refer to the

behavior of the people who still followed the wicked influence of those Godless monsters of 150 years before. Omri, king of Israel (cir. 894–876 B.C.) was a man of consummate iniquity (1 Kin. 16:25). He produced not only a wicked son, Ahab, who corrupted Israel with the worship of Baal (1 Kin. 16:30–33). Moreover, Ahab and his even more corrupt wife, Jezebel, produced Athalia, a daughter cut from her parents' cloth, who hastened the corruption of Judah through her marriage to Jehoram, one of the worst of Judah's monarchs (2 Chr. 21:5–6; 22:1–4). Thus the solemn charge and judgment of verse 16 is seen to apply to all of Jacob (both Israel and Judah). (Influence is a powerful thing, spanning generations, yea centuries!) The point of Micah 6:16 is that the people had rejected God by rejecting His law (John 12:48) and now they must pay the inevitable, awful price. This is typical of the even more severe eternal penalty that must be paid for rebellion against God and His Son (John 5:28–29; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:10–11; 2 The. 1:8–9).

Chapter 7:1–20: Micah closed his prophetic message with a final description of the sins of his people, a statement of hope, and an outpouring of praise. Verses 1–6 summarize the widespread iniquity among God's people. Micah was utterly depressed and disappointed at what he saw all about him (v. 1):

1. No righteous man could be found (Psa. 14:1–3; Rom. 3:10), but all sought how to victimize each other (v. 2).
2. They so lusted for evil that they wrought it with both hands; even their leaders openly sought bribes (v. 3).
3. Their finest man was no better than a hurtful brier or thorn hedge; the word of the prophets (watchmen), promising their doom, would come to pass (v. 4).
4. Dishonesty and greed so reigned that none could trust friend, wife, parent, or child (vv. 5–6).

Jesus quoted verse 6 (Mat. 10:35–36; Luke 12:52–53) to describe some of the persecution those who follow Him could expect. The picture painted by Micah is one in which all civil and social institutions had collapsed and anarchy reigned. Such is the sordid picture of man, wherever and whenever there is general rebellion against God!

Verses 7–17 constitute a message of hope, against the backdrop of the terrible trial and suffering they must experience. Micah would not reject God, but would look unto Him in faith for deliverance (v. 7). The rejoicing of God’s enemies would be brief, because God would raise His fallen people after they suffered the fruit of their sin (vv. 8–10). He would restore them, Zion’s walls would be rebuilt, and the nations would come to her for blessing (vv. 11–12). Those in the world who would reject God and His people would remain bereft of blessing as the fruit of their works (v. 13). God would give His remnant of faithful people the choice blessings of peace and security such as would cause the nations to be awe–struck (vv. 14–17).

One sees in this highly figurative language a reference to the literal return of Israel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the exile. However, we dare not ignore the Messianic implications of the passage. These include:

1. The building of the church in Jerusalem (v. 11; cf. 4:1)
2. The universal appeal the church would have through the Gospel message (v. 12; cf. 4:1–2)
3. The peace and security that would reside in her (v. 14; cf. Eph. 2:15; Phi. 4:6; Heb. 13:5–6)
4. The marvelous signs and wonders of the Lord and His apostles that would accompany it (v. 15; cf. John 20:30–31; Acts 2:1–2; 5:12; I Cor. 12:8–11; et al.).

In verses 16 and 17 there may be a reference to the demonstration of God’s power in the resurrection of His Son and the way it would cause to pale in comparison all the power that Satan-inspired men could bring against Him (i.e., His crucifixion). Satan’s efforts would only “bruise His heel,” but He would “bruise Satan’s head” (Gen. 3:15). Even the “gates of Hades”—death itself—would not prevent the establishment of His church/kingdom (Mat. 16:18–19)! Others see in these verses the power of the Gospel to humble men⁷ or the abject submission of all men to God and His Son at the Judgment.⁸ Those who see in this section promises of a literal millennial kingdom on earth during which the nations shall submit to Israel with Christ on a throne in Jerusalem are guilty of grievous and fatal error.

Verses 18–20 contain a beautiful doxology, a natural progression from the preceding recital of God’s blessings upon His restored Israel. He is an incomparable God, able to forgive even the atrocious iniquities of which His people were guilty (vv. 18–19). Micah concluded by stating that God would fulfill the promises he had foresworn to Abraham and Jacob (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 28:14). These promises required the preservation of Israel until their fulfillment. Since Micah knew that they had not yet been fulfilled, he knew beyond doubt that Israel would be preserved and returned from captivity. We have the light of the New Testament to show us that our Christ was the aim of those promises (Gal. 3:16), through Whom all men who will may be blessed by His saving Gospel!

Conclusion

The prophecy of Micah is a marvelous piece of inspired literature. It demonstrates the inspiration of its author by its otherwise totally inexplicable detailed prophecies of the literal destruction and captivity of both Israel and Judah, of the exile to Babylon, and of the return. It is even more remarkable in its detailed prophecies of the establishment of the church and of the birthplace of the Only Begotten Son of God. One must be an infidel of the rankest sort to deny the inspiration of this book.

Endnotes

1. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
2. James Moffatt, *Holy Bible, A Translation* (New York, NY: Harper and Co., 1930).
3. For a fuller discussion of this reunification see the author’s material in *Living Lessons from the Prophets* (Knoxville, TN: East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 1985), pp. 202–03.
4. Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 200.
5. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., rep. 1982), 10:456.
6. James Burton Coffman, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Pub. Co., 1981), 2:339–41.
7. Hailey, p. 220.
8. Coffman, pp. 375–76.

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Holy Spirit Error—Again

Jerry C. Brewer
Elk City, OK

Like multitudes of brethren today, Benjamin Franklin, editor of *American Christian Review*, at first tended to ignore the apostasy that was sweeping the church in the mid-1800s. Earl Irvin West wrote,

...Ben Franklin up to the war days was following pretty much with the general drift of the brotherhood. He supported missionary societies, and meanwhile, watched anxiously the passing of the years. With the apparent refusal to believe that a drift from the truth could ever come. But by 1859 he began to have a definite feeling that all was not right within the walls of Zion. Unknowingly, the Trojan horse had been rolled into the mighty fortress, and now Zion was beginning to boil with internal dissension. There were enemies on the inside, and he was just awakening to the fact.

But *unlike* multitudes of self-blinded brethren today, Franklin not only awakened to the dangers facing the church in his day, but had the fortitude to speak out and oppose them. He wrote,

We have tried to construe things we have seen among us in a favorable light, and to keep up the conviction that no evil was intended. But it was all in vain; the conviction is *there, deep and strong*, and though we desire to remove it, have tried to have it removed, it only becomes deeper and still deeper, that *evil, most ruinous and mischievous evil is intended*. It is now widely discovered that the terms laid down in the New Testament, as advocated, propagated, and defended with such unprecedented success by the Disciples, for the last thirty years, as one man expressed it, 'have rendered us ridiculous in the eyes of the world,' and that we must, 'go on to perfection.' But where have these men gone to, in 'going on to perfection'? Some of them have gone so far as to reach the silly, the anti-evangelical practice of praying for the conversion of sinners at the mourner's bench! Others of them have

progressed so far as to make the remarkable discovery that the voice of conscience is the voice of God. Again, it has been discovered that man cannot believe the testimony of God till the Spirit quickens him and gives him life. (“The Defection Again,” *American Christian Review*, Vol. II, No. 15, April 12, 1859, p. 58 [cited by West in *The Search For The Ancient Order*, Vol. I, p. 345, 346]).

The errors of which Franklin wrote in 1859 confront the church in 2018. In a sarcastic reference to the “new lights” in his day, he referred to them as, “wisely discovered,” “widely discovered,” and the, “remarkable discovery.” Solomon wrote,

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us (Eccl. 1:9-10)

Franklin knew that in 1859, and we know that today. But that does not prevent “new lights” among us theorizing, speculating, and propagating “*new* discoveries” they are *certain* that no one ever noticed before. Among those are the Holy Spirit errors propagated by such men as Mac Deaver, his toadies who parrot them, and “mainstream churches of Christ” who have adopted them in one form or another.

On their website, the Wilbarger Street church of Christ in Vernon, Texas says that, “We Believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life. The Holy Spirit also empowers believers for service and seals them unto the day of redemption.” David was obviously ignorant of Wilbarger Street's “discovery” when he wrote, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa.73 :24), as was Peter who wrote, “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2 :1). No passage of Scripture teaches that, “The Holy Spirit empowers believers for service.” Nor does the Holy seal anyone today, “unto the day of redemption.” The seal of the Spirit referred to spiritual gifts in the apostolic age.

The “Grace Crossing (A Community Church Of Christ) Conroe, Texas” claims this: “We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, whose indwelling at baptism enables Christians to lead a godly life. (John 16:4-16; Romans 8:9-26; Acts 2:38-39; 2 Corinth. 3:17-18; Ephesians

3:20-21).” Like all “mainstream churches of Christ,” Grace Crossing strings a list of passages together that have no bearing on what they claim.

The East Alameda Church of Christ in Norman, Okla. Claims that, “The Holy Spirit provides the Christian with understanding of spiritual truth and guidance in doing what is right. Romans 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 5:22-26.” So, now we have the Calvinistic doctrine of “Divine Illumination”—that one cannot understand the word of God without additional help from the Holy Spirit, despite Paul's clear statement that, “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4).

The South Yukon Church of Christ in Yukon, Okla. Says, “We believe that the Holy Spirit gave us the revelation from God through the prophets and apostles. He lives in the Christian as a comforter, an intercessor, and guarantee of our inheritance. John 14:16.” After conceding that God's truth came through inspired men, South Yukon then claims that men today have the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised *only to the apostles* in John 14:16.

The Lamar Avenue Church of Christ in Paris, Texas claims that, “God the Holy Spirit is present in the world to make people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides Christians with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth and guidance in doing what is right. (Genesis 1:1, 26-27; Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:1-5; Hebrews 4:14-15; John 16:7-13).” Not only does Lamar Avenue claim that the Holy Spirit “provides Christians with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth and guidance in doing what is right,” but that the Holy Spirit works upon the alien sinner by making, “people aware of their need for Jesus Christ.” That's Calvinism *before* and *after* conversion.

Finally, the Faith Village Church of Christ in Wichita Falls, Texas parrots Mac Deaver's “new discovery” that the Holy Spirit, “is involved in the spiritual formation of every person when he baptizes us in the waters of baptism (Acts 19:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13).”

Then they claim that, “Jesus sent him to live inside every baptized believer so that we can become sons and daughters of God (John 14:16).” Jesus told the apostles in John 14:16, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,” which cannot be construed as, “so that we can become sons and daughters of God,” by any stretch of even

fermentedly ignorant imagination.

Benjamin Franklin was a man of integrity and fortitude who recognized apostasy and spoke out against errors corrupting the church and leading men to hell in his day. The Lord needs such men in our day, but that need is ignored by mute simony practitioners in Memphis, Lubbock, Austin, and a hundred other places. The time for recognizing the separation between the faithful remnant of God's people and the "mainstream" has come—again.

How To Treat The Withdrawn

Part 2

Michael Hatcher
Pensacola, Florida

APPLICATION

I realize that the preceding might have been a little tedious, however, I wanted us to get a full picture of the New Testament teaching. After considering these, it is not difficult to answer how we are to treat the withdrawn. Basically we are to separate ourselves from them. However, is this not the essence of spirituality?

When God created man, He placed man in a beautiful garden where they lived in perfect harmony with God, in fellowship with Him. However, our God is a holy God: free of any and all sin. As such, He cannot associate with sin. “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*” (Hab. 1:13). Thus, when Adam and Eve sinned, that fellowship with God was broken and man died (Gen. 2:17); Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. From the beginning of time, God and sin cannot co-exist, thus God separates Himself from it, and expects His people to separate themselves from it.

God chooses Israel as that nation through whom He will bring His Son. As such, Israel was to be holy to God, as He was holy. “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy....Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I *am* the LORD your God” (Lev. 19:2; 20:7). God gave them His law (the Law of Moses), sacrifices, and offerings so man could be holy. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exo. 19:5-6).

God, to keep Israel holy, separated them from other nations. “But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I *am* the LORD your God, which have separated you from *other* people....And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD *am* holy, and have severed you from *other* people, that ye should be mine” (Lev.

20:24, 26). In separating Israel from other nations and peoples, God gave them the land of Canaan and drove out the nations then possessing the land. “Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be” (Deu. 11:24). “And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite” (Exo. 33:1-2). “And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you” (Jos. 23:5). By driving out the nations then possessing the land, God was making sure that Israel would not be contaminated by their wickedness. God was, at the same time, taking vengeance upon those nations for their wickedness; again because He cannot tolerate evil.

Israel failed to drive out the nations as God commanded them. They were then influenced by those nations and their sin causing Israel to sin. This eventually led to God sending the Israelites into captivity. “Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you” (Jos. 23:15-16). God is holy and cannot associate with sin, and God expects His people to do the same.

Christianity today is the same. We are in the world but we are not of the world. “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:15-16). “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:9). Notice the Christian’s relationship with the world. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the

love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Since we are not of the world, God has called us to separate ourselves from those of the world. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

When a Christian returns to the things of the world leaving Christ, then we must withdraw our fellowship from that individual. We separate ourselves from that brother who refuses to repent. That separation entails an avoiding of the individual so we have no company with him. We are rejecting him, purging him out, showing everyone that his lifestyle is not acceptable. We must not do anything that in any way might show that we approve of or fellowship him spiritually. This avoidance, having no company, etc., extends to eating a common meal with him, which is specifically forbidden by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:11. This shows us that even social settings have spiritual overtones, and in those social settings we cannot do things that might indicate fellowship with the withdrawn brother. In these social settings it might even extend to the refusing to shake hands with him. “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal. 2:9). Thus, if we are in a situation where shaking hands with someone from whom fellowship has been withdrawn would indicate approval of that person, we must refuse to shake hands.

While we withdraw ourselves from the withdrawn, we are to continue to admonish him as a brother. Our association with him is our trying to win him back to Christ. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jam. 5:19-20).

There are extremes on both sides dealing with how we treat this erring brother. One extreme treats the withdrawn as a hated enemy. This ignores our responsibility to try and restore the unfaithful and violates the whole of the

Christian's attitude. We must remember that this is a precious soul for whom Christ died. Our withdrawal of fellowship is to shock the person into realizing their lost condition, make him realize what he has lost, and repent. Treating him in this way hinders the purpose of withdrawal.

The other extreme is that some refuse to withdraw from the person. Instead of withdrawing they will intentionally reject the withdrawal and give comfort to the withdrawn. Almost invariably, when a congregation must take the step of withdrawal, some misguided soul will immediately take the withdrawn out to eat, making themselves subject to withdrawal for walking disorderly (2 The. 3:6).

PROBLEM AREAS

Family

It is especially difficult when a congregation must withdraw fellowship from a family member. It is especially difficult to know and understand how we are to treat this family member. While I certainly do not have all the answers, we do need to realize the purpose of withdrawing (to save the soul) and practice what God says even among family members. Simply because it is a family member does not relieve our obligation to God to have no fellowship.

In this type of relationship, we must remember that God gives us certain family responsibilities. Faithfulness to God demands that we fulfill those obligations to our families. Husband and wife are still married. The husband must still fulfill his role within the home even if the church has withdrawn from his wife. The wife still must fulfill her role within the home, including being in submission to her husband, even if the church has withdrawn from her husband. Parents have the same responsibilities to their children and children to their parents even when one has been withdrawn from. However, realizing we must fulfill these responsibilities, we must still make it clear to the withdrawn that we do not approve of what he has done nor have spiritual fellowship with him.

Congregational

What I mean by the above is when one congregation withdraws from someone, what are other congregations to do? This would also include one congregation withdrawing fellowship from another congregation. What would a third congregation's response be to the congregation withdrawn from? If the withdrawal is according to the Scriptures, then the response should be the same

for everyone. This person (or congregation) has done something that is worthy of withdrawal of fellowship. If it is worthy of withdrawal of fellowship from one congregation, it is worthy of withdrawal from all congregations.

If we would practice recognizing other's withdrawal, it would solve a lot of problems and help people get to heaven. A person withdrawn from at one congregation could not run over to another congregation and be accepted into their fellowship and live as if nothing is wrong in their life. This gives them a false sense of security and hinders their repentance and restoration to God.

CONCLUSION

Let us as the people of God begin practicing the discipline God expects in the total training of Christians. When corrective discipline is needed, let us do what God has commanded. Then let us treat them in the way God instructs, remembering that the purpose of this is the salvation of souls.



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