

## 3. SUCCESS

TEXT: 29:1-8

- 1 Ho Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! add ye year to year; let the feasts come round:
- 2 then will I distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation; and she shall be unto me as Ariel.
- 3 And I will encamp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with posted troops, and I will raise siege works against thee.
- 4 And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.
- 5 But the multitude of thy foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be in an instant suddenly.
- 6 She shall be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.
- 7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her stronghold, and that distress her, shall be as a dream, a vision of the night.
- 8 And it shall be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

## QUERIES

- a. What is "Ariel"?
- b. What is the "voice as of one that hath a familiar spirit"?
- c. What is the meaning of the use of dreaming as an illustration?

## PARAPHRASE

Woe to you altar-city, altar-city, Jerusalem, David's city. Let year follow year and the ceaseless round of feasts and sacrifices continue! But I will bring tribulation upon you, altar-city, and there shall be groaning and grief, and you will indeed become to me an altar of sacrifice! The enemy camp that surrounds you will be My camp; the entrenched troops surrounding you will be My troops; the siegeworks built up around you will be My siegeworks. And you shall be humiliated so that you will no longer boast loudly but you will speak humbly and low—your voice will be but a whisper like the low moaning of a ghost, barely audible. But then suddenly, the multitudes of enemy troops will vanish from their siege against you like dust and chaff when it is blown away in the wind. I, Jehovah of hosts, will come upon them with terrible judgment and power and but multitudes of enemy troops that come upon her will fall short of completing total destruction of Ariel just like when a hungry or thirsty man goes to bed and dreams he is eating and drinking but awakens in the middle of his dream and finds himself only dreaming and still hungry and thirsty. Even so, the appetite of Zion's enemies to devour her will not be satisfied.

## COMMENTS

v. 1-4 TROUBLE TO ARIEL: *Ariel* in Hebrew is usually translated "the lion of God." Sometimes it is translated "the hearth of God." However, in Ezekiel 45:13ff the same word with the definite article added (*h'ariel*) is translated *altar*. The context of verses 1 and 2 form the basis for our paraphrase of the word as "altar-city" for it appears Jehovah is speaking irony or sarcasm to Jerusalem. Jerusalem took pride in the multitude of her altars and sacrifices and religiosity (cf. Isa. 1:10-20). Jerusalem trusted in her own self-righteousness and religiosity rather than in God. She, like Samaria, thought she could

solve her own difficulties with her pagan neighbors through deceit, bribery and compromise. So Jehovah, speaking through His prophet Isaiah, warns Jerusalem that He, even the Lord God of Hosts, is going to bring trouble and distress upon Jerusalem. And the city which took such pride in her altars and sacrifices would (v. 2) itself become an altar of sacrifice to be used as such by God. All the troops which come to encamp and raise siege works against Jerusalem (the Assyrians in Hezekiah's day, cf. Isa. ch. 36-39) will be, in a very definite sense, God's army. God uses pagan armies to carry out His will (cf. Isa. 10:5ff; Jer. 27:1ff; Dan. ch. 7-8, etc.). And Jerusalem, proud, arrogant, haughty and self-righteous, will be humiliated. This undoubtedly has reference to the humiliating experience of Hezekiah and all of Jerusalem when the city was besieged by the Assyrians. In verse 4 the Hebrew word *keav* (with familiar spirit) describes the weakened, humiliated and inarticulate condition Jerusalem will find herself in when God finishes bringing trouble upon her. She will be so weak that what she says will come as spoken by one prostrate upon the ground and as indistinct, unnatural, inaudible and inarticulate as that coming from a necromancer or medium in a trance. The point is the extreme weakness and powerlessness that is to come upon Jerusalem at the hand of Jehovah.

v. 5-8 TRIUMPH OF ZION: But in the city of Jerusalem there are a few, a remnant, who have not trusted in self-righteousness. There is a remnant trusting in Jehovah—disciples of Isaiah who have held fast to the "teaching and to the testimony" (cf. Isa. 8:16-22), and God will save Jerusalem from the Assyrians on their account. The instantaneous suddenness with which God will dispose of Jerusalem's enemies is the miraculous event recorded in II Kings 19, II Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 37:36-38. The Lord sent His angel to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night and the king of Assyria "returned with shame of face to his own land," and some of his own sons struck him down with the sword there. Verse 6 uses highly figurative language to describe the terror and the swiftness of God's destruction of the Assyrian siege. It may be that God

used a literal earthquake, whirlwind, tempest and flaming fire to devour the Assyrians. We are not told specifically how His angel accomplished the destruction. It is interesting to note the figure Isaiah uses to describe the frustrated plans of the Assyrians to devour Jerusalem. Nearly everyone has had the experience of dreaming and awakening with the dream only half completed. In fact, most dreams conclude only partially visualized. Some persons even anticipate in their dream the fact that their dream is going to end incomplete! That is the very nature of dreams. So, the Assyrian attempt to consume Jerusalem is going to come to an end just like a dream . . . incomplete! frustrated! Evil and ungodly men have dreamed for centuries of usurping God's rule of the universe. They have dreamed grandiose dreams of eradicating God's covenant people, the church, Zion, from among mankind, but their dreams have always ended sooner or later uncompleted, frustrated and shamed. So shall all be that fight against Zion! God says it is so! History demonstrated it to be so!

### QUIZ

1. Why is Ariel most likely to be translated "altar"?
2. How would Jehovah encamp against Jerusalem?
3. What is the point of likening Jerusalem's voice to that of a medium?
4. How do we know God's judgment upon Jerusalem's enemies was sudden?
5. How did God deliver Jerusalem from her enemies?
6. What does dreaming have to do with the downfall of Jerusalem's enemies?

### 4. SULLENNESS

TEXT: 29:9-16

9 Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not

with strong drink.

- 10 For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered.
- 11 And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed:
- 12 and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.
- 13 And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them;
- 14 therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.
- 15 Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?
- 16 Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not; or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding?

### QUERIES

- a. How is the "book" sealed?
- b. What was to be God's marvelous work?

### PARAPHRASE

Yes, go ahead and stand around with that look of incredulity. Go ahead and stagger around in your stupor of blinding

self-indulgence. The Lord has allowed you to drown yourselves in a spirit of deep stupor. The Lord has permitted your prophets and wise men to refuse to see His message. God's revelation has become a closed book to you. When men give it to a learned man and ask him to read it he says, I do not understand it, it is a closed book and I cannot read it. When they give it to the illiterate and ask him to read it, he says, I cannot read. None of you, therefore, know God's revelation. Now the Lord says, because you people pay Me only lip-service while your heart's desire is far away from Me, and because you revere the tradition and ritualism of men about My revelation, I will proceed with My program of judgment. I am going to manifest a miraculous judgment, such as only God can do. I am going to destroy the wisdom of your wise men. I am going to bring you into such difficult and impossible circumstances that none of your counselors will know the solution and their so-called wisdom will be shown to be folly. All this woe is to come upon you people because your leaders have taught you to reject the will of the Lord in your lives and they have taught you to believe the Lord is not the sovereign of your life. Your teachers have caused you to reverse reality! You have gotten every thing in life backwards. The clay vessel does not create the potter—the potter is maker and sovereign of the vessel. The pot does not say of the potter, he has no sense.

### COMMENTS

v. 9-12 BROODING: Isaiah represents the people as standing in a sort of stunned, hesitant, stupefied state of sullen disbelief. They think it incredible that Isaiah is predicting Jerusalem will become a bloody altar to the Lord's vengeance. It does not make sense to them. They stare at the prophet like a drunken man stares when he does not comprehend what is being said to him. The Lord has allowed them to fall into a spiritual stupor. They have inebriated themselves and deadened their spiritual comprehension with rebellion against God's revelation and the heady intoxicant of self-exalting, self-justifying

human traditions and rituals. And the Lord has made man a moral being whose choices either make him better or worse. Man's moral choices either blind him or enlighten him. That is the way God made man, so it is ultimately God's doing. The prophet who continues to choose what is false will eventually be blinded to anything true. What a man does not use he loses. When men do not exercise their faculties to choose between evil and good they soon lose the ability to see good as distinguished from evil. The people of Jerusalem have made up their minds that safety and security from the Assyrian menace is to be found in their own political shrewdness and their treaties with Egypt. They have left the Lord completely out of their plans. They do not trust Him. They do not believe He will act in their best interests. They believe their way is superior.

Sullenly they brood over the revelation of God delivered through the writings of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 8:16-22), and when someone asks them what Isaiah's revelation means, their scholars and wise men scoff at it and call it a lot of gibberish and incredible nonsense which no one can understand. Isaiah's writings are like the sealed book of a mystic—they are completely unrealistic and far-fetched. What Isaiah says will never happen according to the wise men of Jerusalem. And, of course, in Isaiah's day many people were illiterate and depended upon priests and prophets and scribes for all their knowledge of what was written in books. The illiterate could not read for themselves, and when the literate would not read Isaiah's writings to them no one knew what Isaiah was revealing from the Lord. The whole nation learned only what the unbelieving, ungodly leaders taught them.

V. 13-16 BELLIGERENT: Now Isaiah turns his attention to the cause of their blindness. Their leaders were teaching them to trust in their religion as it was then being practiced. It was a syncretism of paganism and Jewish tradition. It was a religion of self-merit based on ritual observance and dissociated from any relationship to a personal, righteous, holy, loving God. It was a religion of going through certain

motions and saying certain words, but it had nothing to do with morality, goodness, truth, holiness of life. They had fallen into the same trap the devil has laid for so many men and women—that of compartmentalizing life. Religion is in one compartment; vocation is in another compartment; family relationships in another compartment; recreation in another compartment; none of these compartments of life are supposed to have any influence on the others. These people of Jerusalem gave God lip-service, but their heart—their desires and aspirations—was focused on themselves and the things of the world. The center of their lives was not God and His holiness but their own self-esteem and self-indulgence. They practiced a religion but it had no relationship to their way of life. They did not treasure God so their heart was not with Him (cf. Mt. 5:21). They revered the esteem of men; they treasured the traditions and opinions of men; they believed in man and his ability to solve all his own problems by his human wisdom and so they did not need God. They had simply turned a deaf ear to His prophet and eliminated God from all their plans.

Jesus quoted verse 13 in a confrontation with the Pharisees (Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23) over Jewish traditions. The Pharisees valued their traditions and opinions so highly they were eager to break the commandment of God in order to promote their traditions. It is the same old story of mankind's pride rejecting divine wisdom and sovereignty in favor of its own finite and fallible wisdom. To accept and be guided by divine revelation from The Sovereign God entails human surrender and self-humiliation—a full and complete trust in God's word over one's own wisdom. This is not easy. God has never said it was easy. But man's historic experience, coupled with God's historic demonstration of Himself in His Son, should prove beyond the slightest doubt that man is lost if left to his own wisdom.

Isaiah's prophecy here had immediate reference to the marvelous wonder God was about to do in the Assyrian siege and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the angel of death slaying



185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. When God sent the Assyrian hordes and they got their strangle-hold on Jerusalem, the wisdom of Jerusalem's wise men was shown to be the foolishness it really was. Judah's leaders had advised that an alliance with Egypt would protect them from Assyria. The leaders discounted all Isaiah's warnings of judgment from Jehovah as so much nonsense. In effect they were saying, Isaiah is a fool and he is wrong; God has nothing to do with our political affairs; what God supposedly advises through Isaiah is foolishness; we know what is right and effective in our own affairs. So, when God allowed them to be brought to utter helplessness and near to being completely consumed by the Assyrians, He was destroying the wisdom of the wise.

The climactic point in history where God demonstrably destroyed the wisdom of the wise was at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All the human schemes and philosophies of self-righteousness, self-esteem and self-salvation were thoroughly invalidated and shown to be foolishness. The cross and the resurrection were demonstrated to be the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. That is why the apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 29:14. Every historic demonstration of God's wisdom versus man's foolishness in the Old Testament was a type and a prophecy of the climactic demonstration at the cross and the empty tomb! The Assyrian siege and the deliverance by the Lord's angel was one of those types!

When a man takes it upon himself to exclude God from any area or circumstance of his life, that man has "turned things upside down!" The man who tries to hide his doings and thinkings from the Omniscient God is a fool! His attempt is as absurd as the clay vessel attempting to say that it made itself and the potter had nothing to do with it. And when man gets his relationship to his Creator upside down all of man's existence gets perverted and in opposition to his real self! All man's moral perverseness, intra-personal antagonisms and self-conflicts are directly related to man's rejection of the sovereignty of his Creator in all the areas of life.

God extends Himself in love to reclaim autonomous, belligerent, sullen man. God carries out His program of reclamation through judgments and redemptions. But man, a free moral agent, must make a willing, humble, surrendered response. Man must surrender to God's sovereignty. God's judgment and redemption of Jerusalem at the siege of Assyria accomplished the reclamation of a remnant through which the Messiah was to be born. But the majority of the Jews continued in their belligerence and sullenness rejecting God's wisdom spoken through the prophets until in Jeremiah's day practically the whole nation (cf. Jer. 5:1) was in rebellion.

### QUIZ

1. Characterize the people of Jerusalem as Isaiah saw them in this chapter.
2. How was Jerusalem to become an "altar" to Jehovah?
3. What was the response of the people of Jerusalem to Isaiah's revelation?
4. What was the cause of the people's attitude toward God's prophet?
5. What was the climactic demonstration of God's destruction of the wisdom of the wise?
6. What is the cause of man's perverseness?
7. How may man find salvation from his perverseness?

### 5. SANCTIFICATION

TEXT: 29:17-24

- 17 Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?
- 18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and

out of darkness.

- 19 The meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
- 20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scoffer ceaseth, and all they that watch for iniquity are cut off;
- 21 that make a man an offender in his cause, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just with a thing of nought.
- 22 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.
- 23 But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name; yea, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel.
- 24 They also that err in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmur shall receive instruction.

### QUERIES

- a. What "day" will the deaf hear words of the book?  
b. Who are the "children" of vs. 23?

### PARAPHRASE

It shall surely not be long before what seems impressive among men, great, forest-like, man-dominating world empires like Assyria will be turned into plowed fields producing fruit for the Lord. And what seems unimpressive among men, the covenant people of God, will be turned into a majestic forest. In that day, many spiritually deaf and blind will hear the word from the book of God's messengers, and they will be brought out of the darkness of falsehood and sin into the marvelous light of God's truth. The meek who have learned patience through discipline and the poor who, having no riches to buy

favours, have had to commit their cause into the Lord's hands, shall all find fulfillment and joy in their trust in the Holy One of Israel. Because at this time, those who have tyrannized God's faithful ones and those who have scoffed at them and shamed them, and all those who have deliberately done evil to them shall be overcome. In that day justice will reign in God's kingdom. Those who try to make the innocent appear to be the guilty, those who try to impugn the integrity of judges, and those who take bribes to pervert justice will be overcome. So, the God who redeemed Abraham from a world of sin, says concerning the progeny of Jacob, the messianic people, You shall never be ashamed of your God again when that day arrives. In that day, Jacob's progeny shall see the work of God in all its fulfillment in their midst in the person of the Messiah, and they shall sanctify themselves unto Him, in reverence and awe to His name. That God keeps His word will be so thoroughly proven then, Jacob's progeny will openly and unashamedly acknowledge Him as the Holy One of Israel. Many of those who had erred will be enlightened, and many who had found fault will learn the truth.

### COMMENTS

v. 17-21 REDEMPTION: God predicts through Isaiah that He is going to work a transformation of the people described in chapters 28:1—29:16. This nation of stupid, unstable, sullen people is to form the basis for a changed society sanctified unto the Holy One of Israel. God is going to refocus the ideas of men concerning the value of human structures versus God's kingdom. Human sovereignty and human schemes (such as the world-encompassing empires have formed to build human utopias—from ancient Babylon to modern Communism) are going to be hewn down, brought low and made to be fields from which God's kingdom will reap its citizenry. The helplessness of human schemes of salvation is going to be demonstrated by centuries of judgments and redemptions of the Jewish

nation and by one great historic act of God when He takes what men have counted as common and unimpressive (the covenant believers) and makes them like a majestic forest in the Messiah and His church. Lebanon (a great forest) represents Assyria and all succeeding world-utopian-schemes. It will be brought low. Judah (a fruitful field) represents the faithful covenant people of God. It will be "esteemed as a forest." Part of the sanctifying process is a reorientation of men's sense of values—a regeneration of their thinking. All the history of the Hebrew people between Isaiah and the Messiah will be given to this goal of reorienting the thinking of those who will believe. It will involve all the captivities, oppressions, deliverances, restorations predicted by the prophets (esp. Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah) and will culminate in the death and resurrection of the Messiah and the establishment of His church.

When that process takes place, some of the spiritually deaf and blind (those who have excluded God from their plans and have turned to human programs and rulers, Egypt, Assyria, etc.) will pay heed to the words of the prophets (like Isaiah) who have delivered God's revealed wisdom in books. They will be enlightened and come to know the truth about where man's salvation lies—not in Egypt (or any human-utopia)—but in Jehovah and His covenant. Those who walk in darkness will see a great light (Isa. 9:1-2) and the veil will be lifted (Isa. 25:6-9).

A reorientation of values concerning what kind of people God chooses as His own will be necessary also. The "meek" and the "poor," who have little to rejoice over in relationship to worldly circumstances, are going to have a joyful inheritance. Through a program of decisive reversals of successive human schemes to rule mankind God is going to demonstrate the only viable program of salvation and regeneration. That program will be one of belief and obedience to His beneficent and sovereign will. Kings and kingdoms will crumble into dust. Pagan philosophies and religions will show themselves to be more harmful than helpful. But the meek and poor humble

believers in the Lord will show that keeping his commandments changes man into the image of his Creator and transforms man into a holy, good, honest, true, loving person. The Hebrew word *aoiyts* in vs. 20 may be translated *violent, fierce, tyrannical one*. Three classes of ungodly will be removed from the midst of God's new society (the messianic kingdom). God's redemption will rescue those who trust Him from all who want to destroy their souls—tyrants, scoffers and evil-doers. The prophet is not saying that those who kill the body will be cut off. As long as the present world exists there will be tyrants, scoffers and evil-doers killing and persecuting believers. But they can destroy only the body. Those who trust in the Lord will be rescued from the spiritual destruction these ungodly ones can cause. God's new society will also be characterized by the absence of dishonest, unjust, greedy persons (vs. 21).

V. 22-24 REGENERATION: The Lord, Jehovah, rescued Abraham from idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees. As a result of his redemption Abraham became a changed man. He became a giant of the faith—named by God as "a friend of God" (cf. Heb. 11:8-12; Jas. 2:21-24). Just so, God's redemption of the progeny (house) of Jacob will bring about regeneration, spiritual rebirth. The descendants of Jacob (those who believe and trust God—both Jew and Gentile; cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:6ff; 6:16; etc.) will be changed in attitude and deed. Israel oftentimes thought of herself as inferior to the rich, powerful, sophisticated, indulgent pagan nations surrounding her. Her consuming desire was "to be like the nations." She was ashamed of her God. But when God culminates His great redemptive program, Jacob's spiritual descendants will change their minds (repent) of that attitude. The RSV more properly translates the latter half of vs. 22 ". . . Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale."

In view of the context we think vs. 23 could be paraphrased as follows: When the covenant nation sees true children of God, the work of God's hands, in its midst, many of the nation will be converted and set apart in the new, messianic kingdom, the church. Many will sanctify God and revere Him as sovereign

of their lives. The fulfillment of this may be readily seen in the book of Acts of Apostles. When God had completed His great redemptive work in the death and resurrection of Christ, the church was begun on the Day of Pentecost. Those converted Jews began to go into all the world preaching and living the gospel. Thousands upon thousands, seeing true children of God, the work of God's hands, sanctified the name of the Lord in their lives also. This was a great manifestation of regeneration of the house of Jacob from what they were in Isaiah's day!

Those "wandering in spirit" and those "finding fault" (vs. 24) will also be regenerated in their attitude. These are the spiritually blind and deaf. The history of Israel is replete with "wanderers" and "murmurers" (cf. Heb. 3:7ff, etc.). They wandered in spirit because they succumbed to false teachings, and they murmured resisting the truth. Isaiah connects regeneration and sanctification directly to instruction and understanding. Conversion begins in the mind. Sanctification (continuing conversion) is a continuing mental process. Neither conversion nor sanctification comes to any man unless it comes through the process of learning, understanding and practicing the truth! No one can be converted without knowing what the Bible says. No one can continue in the sanctified life without knowing, understanding and practicing what the Bible says. Teaching and preaching the word of God is not just important — *it is crucial!* Knowing and understanding the word of the Lord would be a complete change from the Israel of Isaiah's day (cf. Hosea 4:1-6, etc.).

### QUIZ

1. Who is "Lebanon" and who is "the fruitful field"?
2. Why is God going to change the position of the two mentioned above?
3. Who are the "meek" and "poor" and what will be their new circumstances?
4. Why mention the redemption of Abraham?

5. Name three changes of attitude that Isaiah predicts will take place in "Jacob's house."
6. What does instruction and understanding have to do with conversion and sanctification?

### EXAMINATION

#### CHAPTERS TWENTY-EIGHT THROUGH TWENTY-NINE

#### DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

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|--|--|
| 1. <i>fat valley</i>                     | 7. <i>fitches</i>                            |
| 2. a <i>mighty</i> and <i>strong</i> one | 8. <i>Ariel</i>                              |
| 3. <i>residue</i>                        | 9. <i>familiar spirit</i> out of the ground  |
| 4. <i>precept</i> upon <i>precept</i>    | 10. hungry man <i>dreameth</i>               |
| 5. men of <i>strange</i> lips            | 11. him that is <i>not learned</i>           |
| 6. covenant with <i>death</i>            | 12. fruitful field esteemed as <i>forest</i> |

#### MEMORIZATION

"And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people \_\_\_\_\_ nigh unto me, and with their \_\_\_\_\_ and with their \_\_\_\_\_ do \_\_\_\_\_ me, but have \_\_\_\_\_ their \_\_\_\_\_ far from me, and their \_\_\_\_\_ of me is a commandment of \_\_\_\_\_ which hath been \_\_\_\_\_ them; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a \_\_\_\_\_ work among this people, even a marvellous work and a \_\_\_\_\_; and the \_\_\_\_\_ of their wise men shall perish, and the \_\_\_\_\_ of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isa. 29:13-14)

#### EXPLANATION

1. Explain the predicament Judah was in as a result of the drunkenness of its priests and prophets (28:1-8).



## UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

2. Explain the people's question, "Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned . . .?" 28:9
3. Explain why and when God's people would sanctify God's name upon seeing His children. (29:23)

### APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. How may Isaiah's warning to the immature, unteachable people of his day be applied to the Corinthian church of the New Testament and to the church today? (28:9-13)
2. What lesson will be learned by Judah in its attempt to make lies its refuge and hide itself under falsehood and what application may be made to national politics today? (28:14-22)
3. How did the Lord pour out upon the people a spirit of deep sleep, and how may this whole discussion of their refusal to know God's will be applied today? (29:9-16)

### SPECIAL STUDY

## UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTION

"First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.' They *deliberately ignore* this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and

an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished." 2 Pet. 3:3-6

## I. Unbelief Almost Incomprehensible

- A. Faced by what seems so logical and reasonable, so sensible and so beneficial evidence . . . so true and right . . . we do not understand why there is unbelief.

Why do so many people who seem sensible, sincere, reasonable, not acknowledge the same truths we hold to be so self-evident?

Why, in a world of so many intelligent, relatively moral and upright people, is there so much unbelief?

- B. Peter, in our text, I believe, shows the primary cause of unbelief—**DELIBERATE IGNORANCE.**

The Bible has a great deal to say about this . . . we will discuss it in just a moment from the aspect of Peter's entire 3rd chapter of this 2nd epistle.

## II. Some Unbelief is Due to a Simple Lack of Knowledge

- A. "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ." Rom. 10:17
- B. Often times children grow up, even in Christian homes, without ever having been given a faith with foundations in facts or evidence (cf. Deut. 6:6-25).
- C. The church has not fulfilled her mission until she has presented the good news founded on the evidences of factual history.
- D. But even a lack of knowledge will not be accepted as an excuse by God since all men have had enough knowledge of God revealed to them that they stand condemned by God if they disbelieve (cf. Rom. 1:18ff).

**SO, PRIMARILY SPEAKING, UNBELIEF IS MORAL REBELLION.**

# UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

## DISCUSSION

### I. Unbelief is deliberate.

A. "For this they willingly are ignorant of . . ." another translation says, "They purposely ignore this fact . . ." v. 5

1. Unbelief comes to men because they deliberately choose to ignore the facts as these facts reveal a God to whom they have a moral responsibility.

2. Rom. 1:21 men . . . "became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." v. 25, "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie . . ." v. 28 "they refused to have God in their knowledge."

"But the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. 1:20

3. Men may deny the facts if they wish . . . but they are without excuse because God is so sufficiently revealed even in nature that unbelief condemns men . . . the evidence, the facts are so abundant that any man who says there is no God is a fool, for only a fool is willingly ignorant.

Dr. G. G. Simpson, famous Paleontologist from Harvard once said concerning some highly improbable evidence as to the origin of the horse "it is so improbable as to be unacceptable *unless* we can find no hypothesis more likely to explain the facts." IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT AN UNACCEPTABLE EXPLANATION IF THERE IS, IN HIS ESTIMATION, NONE BETTER!

4. Jesus once made a most shocking accusation against the Pharisees, "But because I say the truth, ye believe

me not." Jn. 8:45 The very reason they would not believe Jesus was the fact that he told them the truth. There is hardly a worse state man can get himself into than this!

5. Those who hate the truth will be deceived and believe a lie (II Thess. 2:10-12). These do not love the truth; therefore, they are not attracted to it and even when they see it, they hastily reject it and rationalize their reaction.
6. The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not (II Cor. 4:3-4). These refuse to listen to the truth when it condemns the unrighteous things in which they find pleasure and which they are determined to continue . . . Thus they seek for some message which will assure them that the unrighteous thing is right and thus permit them to continue in it without being rebuked by their conscience. God sends such people strong delusions in that He has ordained the laws of man's heart and of morality, and that person who has no love for the truth and who lives in and takes pleasure in unrighteousness will unfit his heart for the reception of truth and fit it for the reception of strong delusions which comfort and assure him in his error and unrighteousness.

Dr. Henry Morris, when on the OBC campus for the 1966 Science & Scripture Forum, emphasizing the impact of the 2nd law of thermodynamics upon theories of evolution concluded that ANY SCIENTIST AWARE OF THIS LAW (AND ALL SHOULD BE) WHO REMAINS AN EVOLUTIONIST OR UNIFORMITARIAN, MUST DO SO BY DELIBERATELY IGNORING THIS FACT!

7. Jeremiah put it this way . . . "Behold their ears are closed, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn, they take no pleasure in it." Jer. 6:10 (see also Jer. 6:16-19).
- B. "scoffers . . . *walking after their own lusts* . . ." v. 3
  1. Unbelief comes to men because they choose to walk after their own lusts . . . Rom. 1 . . . "God gave

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them up to the lusts of their own hearts . . . unto vile affections . . . they not only do these things but even take pleasure in seeing others do them."

2. The people of Israel cried out to Moses as Pharaoh approached, "It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness . . . would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full . . ." Ex. 14:10-12; 16:1-3  
Desire to satisfy the flesh chokes out the word, Mt. 13:13-23
3. Unbelief is due to the fact that men choose deliberately to have physical security, or sensual pleasure, or pride.
4. Agrippa's lust for a woman not his own caused him to deliberately refuse to believe Paul. Acts 26:28
5. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness* rather than light, *because their deeds were evil*. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved (exposed for what they really are)." Jn. 3:19-20
6. "For the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths." (II Tim. 4:3-4) (cf. also Micah 2:11; Hosea 5:4; 4:6)
7. One of man's lusts which causes him to deliberately disbelieve is **PRIDE**.
  - a. Pride from wealth, Deut. 8:1-20
  - b. Pride from power, Ex. 5:2; Dan. 4:30; 5:23
  - c. Pride from security, Obadiah 3
  - d. Pride in self-righteousness, Job 33:9; Lk. 18:11; Jn. 9:39-41; Rev. 3:17
  - e. Pride from self-sufficiency, Jas. 4:13-17
  - f. Pride is man's desire for human autonomy over against the sovereignty of God . . . a proud man

*does not need* a Provider, Protector, Guide and Saviour. But he is not free; he hides—one way or another, he hides.

ANIMAL LUSTS OF MEN DECEIVE THEM INTO DELIBERATELY DENYING GOD, THE BIBLE, HEAVEN AND HELL, BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SATISFY THEIR FLESHLY DESIRES . . . THEY DO NOT NEED GOD FOR THEY ARE SELF-SUFFICIENT; THEREFORE THEY “WANDER (deliberately) INTO THE MYTHS OF EVOLUTION, HUMANISM, COMMUNISM, AND JUST PLAIN STUBBORNESS.”

ALL OF US HAVE HEARD PEOPLE SAY, “I KNOW THE BIBLE IS HISTORY AND IT’S TRUE AND I OUGHT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT ITS DEMANDS, BUT I’M NOT READY TO GIVE UP THIS AND THAT, AND SO ON.” . . . OR SOME WILL SAY, “I CAN’T BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS TRUE BECAUSE THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS IT CONDEMNS WHICH I FEEL ARE ALL RIGHT.”

C. “they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest the scriptures* unto their own destruction” II Pet. 3:16

1. Unbelief comes to men when they wrest the scriptures.
2. Satan, the father of unbelief, perverted the scripture at the temptation of Jesus (Mt. 4:5-6).
3. Paul had to contend with the Judaizers who corrupted (II Cor. 2:17) and dishonestly handled the word of God deceitfully (II Cor. 4:2).
4. The prejudiced and biased mind is a form of deliberate unbelief (cf. Jn. 8:12; 7:24); so also is the one who allows himself to be influenced by rumor or opinions of so-called intelligentsia (cf. Jn. 7:12; 7:40-43; Jas. 1:6-7; Eph. 4:13-14).
5. Cowardice or conformity also leads to deliberate unbelief (cf. Jn. 12:41-43; Jn. 9).
6. Liberalism, Modernism—a result of men who have deceitfully and dishonestly handled the Word of God—has infected hundreds of thousands of gullible people who feel they must conform in churches all around us and within the Restoration Movement.
7. Existentialism, by deceit, has duped many into unbelief.

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8. Men, by their traditions, have made void the word of God and led many unto unbelief.

THE WRESTING OF THE SCRIPTURES TO MAINTAIN DIVISION WITHIN CHRISTENDOM BRINGS UNBELIEF . . . JESUS PRAYED IN JOHN 17 . . . "THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE, THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU DIDST SEND ME!"

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES IS CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF DISRESPECT FOR GOD AND, ON THE OTHER HAND PRIDE IN SELF!

WHEN MEN EXCHANGE THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE, THEY BEGIN TO WORSHIP THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR . . . PERHAPS NOT FROGS AND CROCODILES LIKE THE EGYPTIANS . . . BUT MAN WORSHIPPING MAN IS JUST AS DESPICABLE FOR IT IS CREATURE WORSHIP!

9. The Jews of the Prophet's days wrested the scripture by interpreting the promise of the Messiah and His kingdom as one of fleshly indulgence . . . their hearts were filled with unbelief.
10. The Pharisees wrested the scriptures to declare their goods "Corban" . . . they deceitfully handled the Word of God to take oaths by the gold of the altar rather than the altar itself and robbed people and refused to pay pledges (Mt. 23).

THE SEEMING SLACKNESS OF GOD IN BRINGING JUDGMENT UPON DISOBEDIENCE OR PERVERSION OF GOD'S WORD CAUSES MEN TO FEEL THEY CAN USURP GOD AND DO AS THEY PLEASE WITH HIS WORD . . . WRESTING IT TO SERVE THEIR LUSTS.

It is clear that the evidences for Christianity are of such nature that they bring to the surface what is in a man! If one is unwilling to follow Christ because of the demand which such would make on his life, he can think up "reasons" to justify his unwillingness. The real reason—his unwillingness—will be hidden from others by these "rationalizations" and finally even from himself because he does not think beyond these "reasons."

The fact that one must love the truth indicates that the attitude of heart has something to do with whether or not one will believe. He who wants a careless, immoral life will not

want the faith which is a constant rebuke to such a life.

II. Belief is deliberate.

A. Saving faith is voluntary. Had the revelation of God been so strong that anyone beholding could not disbelieve, it would have overridden moral freedom and this would be evidence unsuitable to moral subjects.

B. The true purpose of God is not to produce obedience by force, but to treat men as free moral agents.

C. Belief comes to an informed mind.

1. Peter writes to "stir up their mind and to call to remembrance the revealed word of God." II Pet. 3:1

2. God's revelation was made intelligently, and he expects man to apprehend it with the use of intelligence (Rom. 10:17)

3. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I Jn. 1:3

Paul "reasoned" with the Jews from the scriptures about the Christ.

WE MUST DELIBERATELY LEARN AND RECEIVE THE FACTS ABOUT GOD, JESUS AND THE BIBLE, BEFORE WE CAN BELIEVE . . . PETER IS ONE WHO PUTS A PREMIUM ON KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST THROUGH THE WORD FOR HE KNOWS THAT BELIEF COMES THIS WAY! (I Pet. 1:22-25; 3:15; II Pet. 1:3-11; 1:12-15; 1:16-21; 3:18)

B. Belief comes to a submissive will.

1. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Jn. 7:17

2. The Pharisees of Jesus day were filled with unbelief because they would not let the word of Christ "have free course in them." Jn. 8:37

3. THIS SAME STUBBORN UNWILLINGNESS TO DO GOD'S WILL LED THE PHARISEES TO REJECT THE COUNSEL OF GOD, REFUSING TO BE BAPTIZED OF JOHN THE



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BAPTIST (Lk. 7:29-a30).

4. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." I Jn. 2:3
  5. GOD GAVE MAN A WILL . . . HE GAVE HIM A FREE WILL . . . MAN IS FREE TO SURRENDER TO WHATEVER HE WISHES . . . BELIEF OR UNBELIEF.
- C. Belief comes to a pure heart.
1. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Does not Jesus mean believe in God?
  2. The honest and good heart is the soil upon which the seed (the word of God) falls and brings forth much fruit. Lk. 8
  3. "But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Jn. 3:21

A HEART CALLOUSED BY IMPURITY, GREED, LASCIVIOUSNESS, AND SIN IS HARDENED AGAINST ANY KIND OF BELIEF EXCEPT UNBELIEF! THE HEART THAT IS PURE, CLEAN, AND WHOLESOME IS MALLEABLE, SOFT, COMPASSIONATE, EASILY ENTREATED, RESPONSIVE TO THE HIGHEST AND NOBLEST . . . RESPONSIVE TO THE DIVINE LOVE LETTER . . . GOD'S BOOK OF LOVE!

## CONCLUSION

HOW DOES MAN, SNARED IN THE TRAP OF THE DEVIL, BLINDED BY THE DEVIL, DECEIVED BY THE DEVIL INTO UNBELIEF, COME TO BELIEF??

- I. There must be an *a priori* which must be admitted. Man must admit that he is rational and that there are objects and facts to be known. To deny he thinks he must think. Even to represent himself to be irrational he must think rationally!
- II. Many facts (truths) are MORAL FACTS. That is they exhibit form or display moral character or attributes. All of God's works (both natural and supernatural) exhibit His moral

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attributes and character . . . His wrath upon sin; His love for the sinner (cf. Rom. 1:18-22; Acts 14:15-17; Acts 17:22-31; Jn. 3:16, etc.)

- III. The will or the "heart" or the mind of man must be changed or moved or transformed by a presentation of "moral facts" (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 10:3-5; Rom. 10:17).
- IV. Man then makes a choice or gives assent to what he knows to be true and moral and right. An emotion is "an experience brought about by the prospect of some value's being gained or lost. We become emotional about something after receiving the moral facts and reasoning on them—then we make a choice . . . WHICH IS MOST TO BE DESIRED . . . MATERIAL OR SPIRITUAL?"
- V. MAN THEN COMES TO FAITH . . . Faith is trust, love, obedience, commitment. Faith is an experience—based squarely on the foregoing steps.

An infamous woman atheist, speaking on the campus of Drake University, asked why she speaks on college campuses, replied, "To corrupt the youth!"

She said, "I believe this would be the best of all possible worlds if everybody were an atheist or an agnostic or a humanist.

"I don't think the church has ever contributed anything to anybody, any place, at any time. I can't pinpoint a period in history or a place in the universe where religion has actually helped the welfare of man.

"There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that Jesus ever really existed, even as a mortal. I don't believe he was a historical figure at all. Until someone proves otherwise, therefore, these stories about him must be considered nothing more than folk tales consisting in equal parts of legend and wish fulfillment. But there is never going to be any way of verifying them one way or the other.

WOULD YOU SAY THIS WOMAN IS A FREE-THINKER . . . ALWAYS WILLING TO INVESTIGATE EVIDENCE . . . OPEN-

MINDED . . . OBJECTIVE!!!?

“Also, I reject the idea of a life hereafter on the same grounds. Do you know anybody who has come back with a first-hand report on heaven? If you do, let me know. Until then you’ll pardon me if I don’t buy it.

“I agree with Mark Twain, who wrote about the hereafter, that there is no sex in it ; you can’t eat anything in it; there is absolutely nothing physical in it. You wouldn’t have your brain, you wouldn’t have any sensation, you wouldn’t be able to enjoy anything—unless you were queer for hymn singing and harp playing. So who needs it? SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I’D RATHER GO TO HELL.”

UNBELIEF CAN’T GET ANY MORE DELIBERATE THAN THAT!

It is a matter of choice! Choose ye this day whom you will serve. Why go ye limp between the two sides, if Baal be God worship him. Jesus depicted life as a choice between two ways—not three (no neutrality).

## B. FRIENDS THAT FETTER, CHAPTERS 30-31

### 1. SHAME

TEXT: 30:1-14

- 1 Woe to the rebellious children, saith Jehovah, that take counsel, but not of me; and that make a league, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;
- 2 that set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt!
- 3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.
- 4 For their princes are at Zoan, and their ambassadors are come to Hanes.
- 5 They shall all be ashamed because of a people that cannot