

Revival and Reformation

Day 12. Obey and Live – Disobey and Die

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“In proclaiming the truths of the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, God’s church on earth today is fulfilling the ancient prophecy, “Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” Isaiah 27:6. The followers of Jesus, in co-operation with heavenly intelligences, are rapidly occupying the waste places of the earth; and, as the result of their labors, an abundant fruitage of precious souls is developing. Today, as never before, the dissemination of Bible truth by means of a consecrated church is bringing to the sons of men the benefits foreshadowed centuries ago in the promise to Abraham and to all Israel, — to God’s church on earth in every age, — “I will bless thee, ...and thou shalt be a blessing.” Genesis 12:2.” Prophets and Kings, 703.

Let Us Meditate Upon Psalm 119:153–160

Resh – Twentieth Letter of the Hebrew Alphabet

“Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes. Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments. Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness. Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.”

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“This promise of blessing should have met fulfillment in large measure during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God’s design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ, even as today the way is preparing for His second coming. At the end of the years of humiliating exile, God graciously gave to His people Israel, through Zechariah, the assurance: “I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain.” And of His people He said, “Behold, ...I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.” Zechariah 8:3, 7, 8.

These promises were conditional on obedience. The sins that had characterized the Israelites prior to the captivity, were not to be repeated. “Execute true judgment,” the Lord exhorted those who were engaged in rebuilding; “and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother.” “Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.” Zechariah 7:9, 10; 8:16.” Prophets and Kings, 704.

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“Rich were the rewards, both temporal and spiritual, promised those who should put into practice these principles of righteousness. “The seed shall be prosperous,” the Lord declared; “the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so I will save you, and ye shall be a blessing.” Zechariah 8:12, 13.

By the Babylonish captivity the Israelites were effectually cured of the worship of graven images. After their return, they gave much attention to religious instruction and to the study of that which had been written in the book of the law and in the prophets concerning the worship of the true God. The restoration of the temple enabled them to carry out fully the ritual services of the sanctuary. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, of Ezra, and of Nehemiah they repeatedly covenanted to keep all the commandments and ordinances of Jehovah. The seasons of prosperity that followed gave ample evidence of God’s willingness to accept and forgive, and yet with fatal shortsightedness they turned again and again from their glorious destiny and selfishly appropriated to themselves that which would have brought healing and spiritual life to countless multitudes. Prophets and Kings, 704, 705.

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“This failure to fulfill the divine purpose was very apparent in Malachi’s day. Sternly the Lord’s messenger dealt with the evils that were robbing Israel of temporal prosperity and spiritual power. In his rebuke against transgressors the prophet spared neither priests nor people. “The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel” through Malachi was that the lessons of the past be not forgotten and that the covenant made by Jehovah with the house of Israel be kept with fidelity. Only by heartfelt repentance could the blessing of God be realized. “I pray you,” the prophet pleaded, “beseech God that He will be gracious unto us.” Malachi 1:1, 9.

Not by any temporary failure of Israel, however, was the plan of the ages for the redemption of mankind to be frustrated. Those to whom the prophet was speaking might not heed the message given, but the purposes of Jehovah were nevertheless to move steadily forward to their complete fulfillment. “From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same,” the Lord declared through His messenger, “My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the heathen.” Malachi 1:11.” Prophets and Kings, 705.

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“The covenant of “life and peace” God had made with the sons of Levi – the covenant which, if kept, would have brought untold blessing – the Lord now offered to renew with those who once had been spiritual leaders, but who through transgression had become “contemptible and base before all the people.” Malachi 2:5, 9.

Solemnly evildoers were warned of the day of judgment to come and of Jehovah’s purpose to visit with swift destruction every transgressor. Yet none were left without hope; Malachi’s prophecies of judgment were accompanied by invitations to the impenitent to make their peace with God. “Return unto Me,” the Lord urged; “and I will return unto you.” Malachi 3:7.

It seems as if every heart must respond to such an invitation. The God of heaven is pleading with His erring children to return to Him, that they may again co-operate with Him in carrying forward His work in the earth. The Lord holds out His hand to take the hand of Israel and to help them to the narrow path of self-denial and self-sacrifice, to share with Him the heirship as sons of God. Will they be entreated? Will they discern their only hope? Prophets and Kings, 706. ⁶

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“How sad the record, that in Malachi’s day the Israelites hesitated to yield their proud hearts in prompt and loving obedience and hearty co-operation! Self-vindication is apparent in their response, “Wherein shall we return?” The Lord reveals to His people one of their special sins. “Will a man rob God?” He asks. “Yet ye have robbed Me.” Still unconvicted of sin, the disobedient inquire, “Wherein have we robbed Thee?”

Definite indeed is the Lord’s answer: “In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:7-12.” Prophets and Kings, 707.

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“God blesses the work of men’s hands, that they may return to Him His portion. He gives them the sunshine and the rain; He causes vegetation to flourish; He gives health and ability to acquire means. Every blessing comes from His bountiful hand, and He desires men and women to show their gratitude by returning Him a portion in tithes and offerings – in thank offerings, in freewill offerings, in trespass offerings. They are to devote their means to His service, that His vineyard may not remain a barren waste. They are to study what the Lord would do were He in their place. They are to take all difficult matters to Him in prayer. They are to reveal an unselfish interest in the building up of His work in all parts of the world.

Through messages such as those borne by Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, as well as through oppression from heathen foes, the Israelites finally learned the lesson that true prosperity depends upon obedience to the law of God. But with many of the people, obedience was not the outflow of faith and love. Their motives were selfish. Outward service was rendered as a means of attaining to national greatness. The chosen people did not become the light of the world, but shut themselves away from the world as a safeguard against being seduced into idolatry.”
Prophets and Kings, 707, 708.

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“The restrictions which God had given, forbidding intermarriage between His people and the heathen, and prohibiting Israel from joining in the idolatrous practices of surrounding nations, were so perverted as to build up a wall of partition between the Israelites and all other peoples, thus shutting from others the very blessings which God had commissioned Israel to give to the world.

At the same time the Jews were, by their sins, separating themselves from God. They were unable to discern the deep spiritual significance of their symbolic service. In their self-righteousness they trusted to their own works, to the sacrifices and ordinances themselves, instead of relying upon the merits of Him to whom all these things pointed. Thus “going about to establish their own righteousness” (Romans 10:3), they built themselves up in a self-sufficient formalism. Wanting the Spirit and grace of God, they tried to make up for the lack by a rigorous observance of religious ceremonies and rites. Not content with the ordinances which God Himself had appointed, they encumbered the divine commands with countless exactions of their own devising. The greater their distance from God, the more rigorous they were in the observance of these forms.”

Prophets and Kings, 708.

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“With all these minute and burdensome exactions it was a practical impossibility for the people to keep the law. The great principles of righteousness set forth in the Decalogue, and the glorious truths shadowed in the symbolic service, were alike obscured, buried under a mass of human tradition and enactment. Those who were really desirous of serving God, and who tried to observe the whole law as enjoined by the priests and rulers, groaned under a heavy burden.

As a nation, the people of Israel, while desiring the advent of the Messiah, were so far separated from God in heart and life that they could have no true conception of the character or mission of the promised Redeemer. Instead of desiring redemption from sin, and the glory and peace of holiness, their hearts were fixed upon deliverance from their national foes, and restoration to worldly power. They looked for Messiah to come as a conqueror, to break every yoke, and exalt Israel to dominion over all nations. Thus Satan had succeeded in preparing the hearts of the people to reject the Saviour when He should appear. Their own pride of heart, and their false conceptions of His character and mission, would prevent them from honestly weighing the evidences of His Messiahship.” Prophets and Kings, 709.

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“For more than a thousand years the Jewish people had waited the coming of the promised Saviour. Their brightest hopes had rested upon this event. For a thousand years, in song and prophecy, in temple rite and household prayer, His name had been enshrined; and yet when He came, they did not recognize Him as the Messiah for whom they had so long waited. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” John 1:11. To their world-loving hearts the Beloved of heaven was “as a root out of a dry ground.” In their eyes He had “no form nor comeliness;” they discerned in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. Isaiah 53:2.

The whole life of Jesus of Nazareth among the Jewish people was a reproof to their selfishness, as revealed in their unwillingness to recognize the just claims of the Owner of the vineyard over which they had been placed as husbandmen. They hated His example of truthfulness and piety; and when the final test came, the test which meant obedience unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel and became responsible for His crucifixion on Calvary’s cross” Prophets and Kings, 710.

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“Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and henceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight. The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation. Their own fierce passions, uncontrolled, wrought their ruin. In their blind rage they destroyed one another. Their rebellious, stubborn pride brought upon them the wrath of their Roman conquerors. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple laid in ruins, and its site plowed like a field. The children of Judah perished by the most horrible forms of death. Millions were sold to serve as bondmen in heathen lands.

That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today. He has “let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen,” even to His covenant-keeping people, who faithfully “render Him the fruits in their seasons.” Never has the Lord been without true representatives on this earth who have made His interests their own. These witnesses for God are numbered among the spiritual Israel, and to them will be fulfilled all the covenant promises made by Jehovah to His ancient people.”

Prophets and Kings, 712, 713.

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“Today the church of God is free to carry forward to completion the divine plan for the salvation of a lost race. For many centuries God’s people suffered a restriction of their liberties. The preaching of the gospel in its purity was prohibited, and the severest of penalties were visited upon those who dared disobey the mandates of men. As a consequence, the Lord’s great moral vineyard was almost wholly unoccupied. The people were deprived of the light of God’s word. The darkness of error and superstition threatened to blot out a knowledge of true religion. God’s church on earth was as verily in captivity during this long period of relentless persecution as were the children of Israel held captive in Babylon during the period of the exile.

But, thank God, His church is no longer in bondage. To spiritual Israel have been restored the privileges accorded the people of God at the time of their deliverance from Babylon. In every part of the earth, men and women are responding to the Heaven-sent message which John the revelator prophesied would be proclaimed prior to the second coming of Christ: “Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.” Revelation 14:7.”
Prophets and Kings, 714.

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“No longer have the hosts of evil power to keep the church captive; for “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,” which hath “made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;” and to spiritual Israel is given the message, “Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Verse 8; 18:4. As the captive exiles heeded the message, “Flee out of the midst of Babylon” (Jeremiah 51:6), and were restored to the Land of Promise, so those who fear God today are heeding the message to withdraw from spiritual Babylon, and soon they are to stand as trophies of divine grace in the earth made new, the heavenly Canaan.

In Malachi’s day the mocking inquiry of the impenitent, “Where is the God of judgment?” met with the solemn response: “The Lord ... shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant.... But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.” Malachi 2:17; 3:1-4.” Prophets and Kings, 715. 14

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“When the promised Messiah was about to appear, the message of the forerunner of Christ was: Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 3:2.

Today, in the spirit and power of Elias and of John the Baptist, messengers of God’s appointment are calling the attention of a judgment-bound world to the solemn events soon to take place in connection with the closing hours of probation and the appearance of Christ Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. Soon every man is to be judged for the deeds done in the body. The hour of God’s judgment has come, and upon the members of His church on earth rests the solemn responsibility of giving warning to those who are standing as it were on the very brink of eternal ruin. To every human being in the wide world who will give heed must be made plain the principles at stake in the great controversy being waged, principles upon which hang the destinies of all mankind.” Prophets and Kings, 715, 716.

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“In these final hours of probation for the sons of men, when the fate of every soul is so soon to be decided forever, the Lord of heaven and earth expects His church to arouse to action as never before. Those who have been made free in Christ through a knowledge of precious truth, are regarded by the Lord Jesus as His chosen ones, favored above all other people on the face of the earth; and He is counting on them to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvelous light. The blessings which are so liberally bestowed are to be communicated to others. The good news of salvation is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

In the visions of the prophets of old the Lord of glory was represented as bestowing special light upon His church in the days of darkness and unbelief preceding His second coming. As the Sun of Righteousness, He was to arise upon His church, “with healing in His wings.” Malachi 4:2. And from every true disciple was to be diffused an influence for life, courage, helpfulness, and true healing.” Prophets and Kings, 716.

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“Light is a blessing, a universal blessing, pouring forth its treasures on a world unthankful, unholy, demoralized. So it is with the light of the Sun of Righteousness. The whole earth, wrapped as it is in the darkness of sin and sorrow and pain, is to be lighted with the knowledge of God’s love. From no sect, rank, or class of people is the light shining from heaven’s throne to be excluded.

The message of hope and mercy is to be carried to the ends of the earth. Whosoever will, may reach forth and take hold of God’s strength and make peace with Him, and he shall make peace. No longer are the heathen to be wrapped in midnight darkness. The gloom is to disappear before the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives.” Prophets and Kings, 719, 720. 17

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“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Isaiah 60:1. Christ is coming with power and great glory. He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father. And the holy angels will attend Him on His way. While all the world is plunged in darkness, there will be light in every dwelling of the saints. They will catch the first light of His second appearing. The unsullied light will shine from His splendor, and Christ the Redeemer will be admired by all who have served Him. While the wicked flee, Christ’s followers will rejoice in His presence.

Then it is that the redeemed from among men will receive their promised inheritance. Thus God’s purpose for Israel will meet with literal fulfillment. That which God purposes, man is powerless to disannul. Even amid the working of evil, God’s purposes have been moving steadily forward to their accomplishment. It was thus with the house of Israel throughout the history of the divided monarchy; it is thus with spiritual Israel today.”

Prophets and Kings, 720 – https://legacy.egwwritings.org/?ref=en_PK.703.1¶=88.3137

Let Us Meditate Upon Psalm 119:57-64

Cheth – Eight Letter of the Hebrew Alphabet

“Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words. I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments. The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.”

Let Us Pray

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts [“living creatures,”], and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever.”

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him.” “He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” Revelation 7:9-12; 19:6, 7; 17:14.” Prophets and Kings, 721.