

Thanks to the John Bunyan Conference Team...

What a blessing once again to be able to gather with a wonderful group of brothers and sisters in Christ, to behold Him, and the glories of His New Covenant Kingdom. Special thanks to Les Clemens and the folks at Reformed Baptist in Lewisburg, PA, who were again such very gracious hosts; to Jake and Carol Moseley, for their loving sacrifice for the sake of Christ; to all of the speakers, who ministered Christ to us; and, as always, with great affection, to John Reisinger.

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Pakistan

I am interested in talking to any of you in the States who might have, or support, mission endeavors in Pakistan.

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Before the Dawn of Primal Light

Before the dawn of primal light,
In secret counsels veiled from sight,
Your love upon my soul did light,
And purposed all for me in Christ.

Though wretched did my life begin,
A loathsome worm cocooned in sin,
Though wrath did hang without, within,
You cast my judgment all on Christ.

Dead eyes, dead ears, a heart of stone,
No hope to find you on my own,
Your Spirit thrust His sharp blade home,
And raised me up to reign in Christ.

•ejr3

The Professor's In

In the University of Zion, the Holy Spirit is the Professor of every class; His own Book, the text for every subject; Christ, the theme of every lecture..

•ejr3

Through the Bible... Part Eleven

When Leaders Lead... Bless the Lord

When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, Bless the LORD! Judges 5:2 NKJV

In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Judges 17:6 (21:5)

Israel has come into the land of promise. But it is not the Israel that came out of Egypt. Out of hundreds of thousand of adults that crossed the Red Sea, only *two* crossed the Jordan - Joshua and Caleb. The rest perished in the wilderness because of unbelief (*Heb 3:19*) manifested by repeated disobedience. Even Moses is dead, though not for unbelief, but for profaning the Rock of Israel before the people (*Num 20:8-12; 1 Cor 10:4*).

In the death of Moses we have the *typology* established: Moses (Law) could not bring the people into the promised rest; it had to be Joshua (Jesus - Jehovah-Savior). But the typological picture is not the reality. The people were consistently unfaithful. As they conquered the land they left many of its pagan inhabitants remaining, clearly contrary to the Lord's commands. They had to be repeatedly prodded to move forward in claiming their inheritances within the land. As a result, pagan idolatry and culture were a perpetual snare to Israel. So, with the death of Joshua, void of any strong leadership, Israel capitulates. And as they repeatedly violate their covenant with Jehovah, they become recipients of its promised curses.

The book of Joshua presses upon us two prominent truths: (1) it is God's faithfulness alone which preserves His people; and (2) it is strong human leadership that God uses in delivering, protecting, and directing His people. As Deborah and Barack begin their song, "*When leaders lead... bless the Lord!*"

Judgment begins upon a people (including the professing church) with a dearth of righteous leadership; and it ends with the arrival of deliverer, or deliverers, to lead them out of bondage. All authority is established by God (). In judgment He gives the people what they deserve (though usually not as bad as they deserve). In restoration he raises up leaders after His own heart.

Israel was established to be a theocracy - ruled directly by God. Yet, because of inherent corruption, unbelief, and rebellious hearts, there was continual need for strong, godly leadership among them. This, ideally, was to be provided by faithful prophets and priests. But, more often than not, the priests were not only unfaithful, they were the 'avant-garde' of sin and rebellion. Many professed prophets proclaimed the vain imagination of their own hearts. In Judges we have this four-hundred year cycle of blessing - rebellion - captivity - a deliverer provided - and deliverance effected.

As New Covenant believers, we are to be under the direct lordship of the indwelling Christ - He alone is King. For every true Christian that reality must never become obscured in our thinking. But, so long as we dwell in a flesh that has not yet been glorified, we have great need for leaders that are gifted and called by God to clarify the way, *verbalizing and validating the truth that has been written on the heart.*

The Lord established the New Testament local church as the venue through which this leadership and pastoral nurturing would be provided. As with Israel of old, whenever people begin to stray from Christ, they set their eyes on the idolatry of the 'inhabitants' of the land and become ensnared by the 'felt blessings' of the world. As God lessens His restraint on the rebellion of their hearts, the spirit of lawlessness quickly ascends to the throne; *everyone does that which is right in his own eyes*, and will have no other authority rule over him. This is why, in every such cycle among professing Christians, one of the first teachings to emerge is that the local church is now outmoded and unnecessary. Any talk of its biblical authority is refuted as abusive, legalistic, and evil in itself. All accountability is lost - *everyone does that which is right in his own eyes.* How tragic that this is the case with so many who want to claim the personal leading of the Holy Spirit. This is NOT the way of the New Covenant, and is 180 degrees away from the thrust of NCT.

This is not to say that great harm has not been done by abusive leadership. Men of selfish ambition or gross incompetence often ascend to positions of authority in the church and in the world; but this is not an excuse before God for rebellion or anarchy, or to reject the very paradigm which the Lord Himself has established. It is a call to those being led to

repent and humble *themselves* before God, pleading God's mercy to raise up righteous, Christ-like leaders of integrity to stand in the gap and lead in restoration.

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 2 Chron 7:14

While we may legitimately debate the application of this verse nationally, (an application which I personally reject) it *must* be heeded by the *people of God*. They *are* the kingdom on earth; and the churches are their land. Much of the 'land' has been overrun by pagan powers, and many of the people are brought into bondage to the rudiments of the world. Even the faithful remnant have firmly fixed their own idols in the temple. Adoration of their favorite preachers, debating and propagating their favorite theology, bowing before well established tradition, and even worshipping the form of the written Word, are allowed, without even realizing it, to replace or obscure the living, personal glory of Christ in His own Church.

Deliverance must begin with the humility and repentance of the Church; and the restoration will be effected by the Lord's giving them a willingness and discernment to follow the godly leadership which He raises up. This will not be leadership in the pattern of the world, but in the pattern of Jesus, with all humility and grace, serving the people for their own well-being and fruitfulness in glorifying God, and advancing His kingdom.

So, on the one hand, we *must* have human leadership this side of our own perfection. On the other hand, we must be diligent to remember that no human leadership - no matter how godly or gifted, collectively or individually - must be allowed to displace the King as Lord. He always must have the preeminence in the Church, and in the heart. He always, by the Spirit, must be the only real Prophet, the only real Teacher, the only real King. When this is the thrust of our leadership we may certainly proclaim, "*When leaders lead... bless the Lord!*"

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