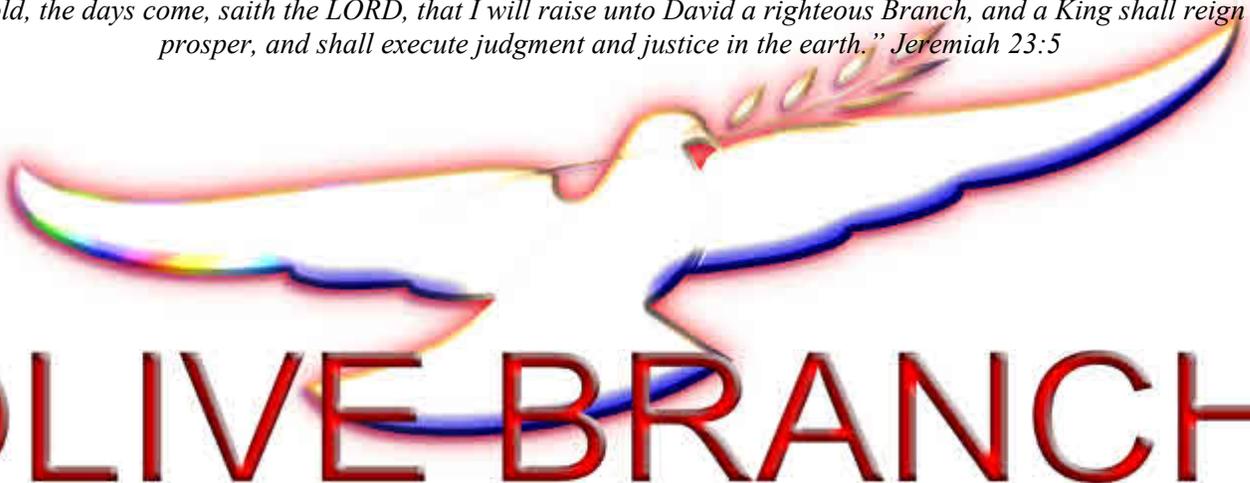


“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Jeremiah 23:5



the
OLIVE BRANCH

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2007

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A publication of
The Church of God
Northeast Region

Preparing God's People: Part 6

We finally conclude our consideration of the admonition in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

- (17) *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*
- (18) *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

To recap what we have studied in this series of messages, we have seen that *judgment* can:

- carry the connotation of a **remedy** being applied to correct what is deficient or lacking (2 Chronicles 29-30).
- show God's **wrath** poured out upon those who have often hardened their hearts toward Him (2 Kings 17-18).
- demonstrate the Lord's **door of mercy being closed** on those who have continually rejected Him (Genesis 7:16).
- mean our being **counted worthy** of His blessings and His mercy (2 Chronicles 32 and 2 Thessalonians 4).

– show that man can reach a state where he becomes judged **unpardonable** or reprobate (Romans 1:21,28), having reached a point of no return where repenting no longer is accepted.



*Regional Overseer
James Smith*

This series of sermons now concludes with the examination of the **finality** of God's judgment. Many people believe they have found "wiggle room" within which they may safely maneuver, running at will into and out of the "straight and narrow way" (Matthew 7:14) and still be saved. Such people see how "close to the edge" they can walk and still claim God's salvation. But this is not to be the case. We know that God has already judged (pronounced the

OVERSEER continued on page 6

Northeast has good showing at the Assembly

More than 20 from our region attended the annual General Assembly in Cleveland, TN in late August.

Here are some pictures from that event and from International Youth Camp, which preceded it. Can you spot the regional attendees?



In other Assembly news, here are the new general auxiliary appointments and themes for the 2007-08 church year:

Evangelism - Bro. Lanny Carter, "Throw Out the Life Line"

CPMA - Bro. Melvin Byers, "To Make All Men See What Is the Fellowship of the Mystery" - Ephesians 3:9

ABM - Bro. Donald Branscum, "Ministering With a Right Spirit" - Psalms 51:10

WMB - Sis. Betty Bishop, "Into His Harvest Fields" - John 4:34

Sunday School - Sis. Maudie Wood, "Faithful Sunday School Attendance"

VLB - Sis. Sharon Griffin, "The Finish Line - Racing to Glory."

What greater thing can we do than enter into the Lord's harvest fields and win souls? Most of us in The Church of God can testify that God has saved our souls, sanctified us and filled us with the Holy Ghost. If we will commit ourselves to fully meeting God's conditions, He will use all of us in the soul-winning business. Let's see what the scriptures tell us about this subject:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions ... Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."
Psalm 51:1, 10-13



WMB

2007-08 Theme:
"Into His Harvest
Fields" - John 4:34



*WMB Coordinator
Peggy Fordyce*

This is believed to be David's great prayer of repentance after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. David seeks a number of things from the Lord, then states that upon receiving these things he would be qualified to teach and win sinners to the Lord. It is worthwhile for us to look at those things which David says qualify us to become soul winners for Christ. Let us take this to heart

and run to every soul that is possible and tell them about Jesus's saving grace.

On another note, thank you for all your labors of love for missions this past church year. God will and has already rewarded us in many ways, but the great reward is coming in heaven one day soon.

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2007-08 Calendar

Northeast Region District Convention (Eastern churches) -- March 22nd at Pittsville, MD

Northeast Region District Convention (Western churches) -- March 29th at Grove City, PA

Ladies Retreat -- May 2-4th at Camp Sunrise, MD

Northeast Regional Convention -- July 9-11 at Uniontown, PA

Youth Camp -- July 24-28th at Camp Bucoco near Pittsburgh, PA

General Assembly -- Aug. 26-30th at Cleveland, TN

CONTACT US

The Olive Branch is a publication of The Church of God Northeast Region, which serves churches in Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania and new works throughout the greater area. It can be viewed online at <http://www.tcog-ne.org>.

Reports and other submissions for the December-January issue must be received by Nov. 1.

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Letters, Testimonies...

Remember the Callender, and Kelley families

Greetings from Karns City. The Lord has been so good to us. We have been having outstanding services and messages.

This has been a busy time for us. We sold hoagies to help the CPMA to buy church flags for other countries. We are getting ready to make apple butter also.

Please pray for the family of Walter Callender, who passed away August 29. Walter was the son of Denzel and Marie Callender. He and his wife Laurie attended our church.

Also, Bro. Tom Kelley's dad passed away Sept. 6. He was 95 years old. We thank the Lord for Bro. and Sis. (James and Nancy) Smith being there and taking part in the funeral. The family appreciated them for being a blessing.

Also, please pray for Julie (Kelley) Fichter. She has been sick again.

Sis. Alma Kelley, Karns City, PA church

Thanks to those who helped with Youth Camp 2007: Following Jesus

I would like to thank each and every one who donated money, food or time to Youth Camp.

The Lord blessed us so much at camp. The campers expressed how they enjoyed the

lessons and music class. The evening services were great. Bro. (James) Smith and Bro. Tim Cox did an outstanding job. We thank the Lord for letting Bro. Tim come (from Virginia).

I would like to encourage all the campers to stay close to the Lord and attend their local churches as often as they can.

I love each and every one of you.

Thank you all again for everything. We had different churches visit us at camp.

Sis. Alma Kelley, Karns City, PA church

Good news just over the border

While Wheeling, WV isn't quite inside the formal bounds of the Northeast region, I am glad to report that The Church of God now has Bible studies taking place in the tiny spit of West Virginia that's between Pennsylvania and Ohio.

All summer, a small group attended classes on the book of Isaiah at our home in Wheeling. For the fall and winter, the class has moved slightly to the north. These classes have reached seven individuals in addition to my family. Please remember us all in your prayers.

Nora Edinger, Monongahela, PA church

*Our regular church feature will
return in the December 2007-
January 2008 issue.*

"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Luke 15:1-2

In his *World Challenge Pulpit Series*, David Wilkinson referred to the 15th chapter of Luke as "The Gospel of the Outcasts." The word "outcast" has a number of definitions: loser, misfit, reject, and sociopath, to mention a few. In Luke 15, the term "outcast" is used to describe those who are immoral or sinful. Publicans are mentioned first -- as tax collectors, they were hated by the mainstream Jews because they generally took a cut of what was paid. To all intents and purposes, they might as well have been drunkards, prostitutes or robbers.

It never failed to astound the Pharisees and scribes that Christ associated with such people. To their way of thinking, any rabbi worth his salt would avoid them like the plague. The fact that He laid hands on them and broke bread with them was more than they could take -- it was clearly over the top.

The rest of the 15th chapter contains three parables, in which Jesus had something for his whole audience -- publicans, sinners, Pharisees and scribes. He started off with the parable of the lost sheep. In the Gospel, sheep represent those who have been saved -- unfortunately, some of them wander off. Sometimes, they run away from God. What did the shepherd do about his lost lamb? He went out searching for it until he found it (v. 4). The take-home message for us is to never quit reaching out



CPMA

2007-08 Theme:

"To Make All Men See What Is the Fellowship of the Mystery" - Ephesians 3:9



CPMA
Coordinator
Roger Fuester

(even if we are rebuffed) and never quit praying for the lost sheep. The Good Shepherd is waiting for that lost sheep to cry out in repentance.

Next came the story of the lost coin. The woman searched diligently until she found it. She also rejoiced. Both this parable (v. 9) and the one preceding (vs. 5-6) stress this thesis -- there is great joy in finding the lost item. In this parable, Christ notes that even the angels in heaven rejoice over the sinner that repents (v. 10) -- can we do any less?

Nearly two-thirds of the chapter is devoted to the third parable, that of the prodigal son. This parable is so well known that even many people who have never read the Bible know it. Most people focus on the lost son -- but the story is really about three people: the son who left home and squandered his fortune, his father and his brother who stayed at home.

The moral of the part of the lost son is one of grace, forgiveness and restoration. The part about the father is again one of rejoicing -- he didn't even upbraid the returning son, who confessed his sins and proclaimed his unworthiness. Instead, he pulled

out all the stops and had a welcome-back party.

Finally, we need to consider the role of son who never left home in the first place. He was put out that his father had made such a fuss over the prodigal son's return. No doubt Christ was thinking of the Pharisees and scribes, because they probably couldn't understand the father's unbridled joy at the return of an undeserving son. The son who had stayed at home complained that, despite his faithfulness, his father had never treated him with such fanfare. But, as the faithful son learned, we must never feel jealousy at the return of a lost sinner.

In closing, let me thank you for your generous response to CPMA's *Banner of Love Project* -- I have personally received offerings totaling \$300 to send to General Headquarters, and this doesn't count additional money that has been sent to local churches or directly to Headquarters by donors. Our brothers and sisters living overseas, who will soon be receiving church flags for their places of worship thanks to these funds, also thank you.

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OVERSEER

continued from page 1

consequence for) sin and the final fruit that it will bear (Romans 6:63).

Let's keep this in mind as we finish by looking at the righteous reign of Josiah, which followed the wicked reigns of Manasseh and Ammon. He was, in many respects, perhaps the most righteous of all the kings of Judah. (2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34). The coming of Josiah was not a mere happenstance – his coming was divinely planned and executed as part of God's judgment of Israel and Judah.

When the kingdom of Israel, under Solomon, split into two kingdoms (southern Judah under his son Rehoboam and northern Israel under the renegade Jeroboam) following his death, we find that Jeroboam built two altars and calves of gold at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:25-33) so that the people of northern Israel would not return to Jerusalem to worship at the temple built by Solomon.

This has always been the strategy of Satan: divide God's people, destroy their unity of purpose, mind and their walk before God. With every sin of man, God has provided (pronounced) an ultimate judgment AND a plan of redemption. Beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God pronounces in Genesis 3:15:

- (15) *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

In the case of Jeroboam erecting the altars and golden calves, God also had a plan. The account of the visitation of a prophet from Judah to Jeroboam with such a plan is described in 1 Kings 13:1-5:

- (1) *And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and*

Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

- (2) *And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.*
- (3) *And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.*
- (4) *And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.*
- (5) *The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.*

The long-term prophecy involving the coming king, Josiah of Judah, would await some 350 years before its fulfillment. Man would have to wait to see whether the prophecy were true. But, to reinforce its certainty (Deuteronomy 18:22), the prophet also gave another prophecy that was immediately fulfilled – the altar of Jeroboam was overturned and its ashes poured out.

Following this prophecy, God continued to plead with Israel to return to Him. He sent them such mighty prophets as Elijah and Elisha. But they would not hear (2 Kings 17:13-18) until they were carried away into Assyria during the reign of Hoshea. The northern kingdom of Israel ceased to be a nation some 250 years following this prophecy.

The destruction of Israel did not invalidate the prophecy against the

altar. This was not God's ultimate judgment of Israel, or of worship at this altar! Another 100 years would pass before its final judgment by the hand of Josiah, king of Judah, as was prophesied.

Before the reign of Josiah, not only Israel but also Judah (under Manasseh – see last sermon) had unpardonably trespassed against the LORD. As punishment for their sins, the nation of Judah would shortly join Israel in its own captivity.

Furthermore, the righteousness of Josiah could not annul the Lord's judgment. Josiah was but 8 years old when he began to reign in Judah! At the age of 16 Josiah began earnestly to seek the God of his fathers, and in the 12th year of his reign Josiah began what would be the fulfillment of the prophet's words regarding the altars of Jeroboam – 2 Chronicles 34:3-7:

- (3) *For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.*
- (4) *And they broke down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he broke in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.*
- (5) *And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.*
- (6) *And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about.*
- (7) *And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land*

of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

This cleansing under the reign of Josiah even exceeded that of Hezekiah. Hezekiah had cleansed and restored Jerusalem and the House of God, but Josiah cleansed all of both Judah and Israel of their idolatrous worship, “when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel.”

Through the righteous acts of Josiah, the Lord demanded that the people of Judah and Israel show Him respect and worship, even as He prepared them to face His wrath as He turned them over to bondage for their unpardonable transgressions – 2 Chronicles 34:24-25:

(24) *Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah:*

(25) *Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.*

So also will it be in the Last Days. The righteous reign of Josiah prefigures the coming righteous reign of our Lord Jesus Christ following the Rapture and the Marriage Supper. God will demand the overthrow of all that is ungodly and the establishment of a righteous reign under a most righteous kingship. During the Millennial Reign, Satan will be bound and a righteous kingdom will rule this earth – Revelation 20:4-6. The earth will be cleansed of all unrighteousness.

Yet this righteous reign of Christ upon this earth does not annul the

judgment awaiting those who have failed to repent and to turn to the Lord. During the Great Tribulation, when Satan rules on this earth, men will yet refuse to repent despite God’s eminent judgment – Revelation 16:8-11:

(8) *And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.*

(9) *And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and **they repented not to give him glory.***

(10) *And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,*

(11) *And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and **repented not of their deeds.***

Nevertheless, these reprobates (Romans 1:28-32) ultimately will confess with everyone else to the Lord’s kingship – whether they like it or not! Romans 14:11-12:

(11) *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

(12) *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

And in Philipians 2:9-11:

(9) *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*

(10) *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

(11) *And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Yes, everyone, at some point, will confess that Christ is Lord, whether it be the result of their repentance, or as they face the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15:

(11) *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

(12) *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

(13) *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

(14) *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

(15) *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Why wait until it is too late? Why not turn to Him now! Why not heed the warning of Proverbs 1:23-28:

(23) *Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*

(24) *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;*

(25) *But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:*

(26) *I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;*

(27) *When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.*

(28) *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.*

Yes, there is a great **finality** to God’s judgment!

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Some final thoughts...

Looking out the window near our home computer I can see a neat row of houses that seems to disappear between a tree bank and a mountain ridge -- although I know they actually continue for a full block. They are close enough that I could probably overhear an occasional porch conversation if I were so inclined, yet it is remarkable how little interaction I have with any of the people who live in them.

I know most of the faces but few names and even fewer details about my neighbors' lives, even such ordinary stuff as what they do for a living. Partly, this is a result of being new in the neighborhood. But, I've lived here and there long enough to realize it is possible to live within a literal stone's throw of people for years or even decades

without having any meaningful interaction.

And it doesn't stop in the neighborhood. I got to wondering the other day just how many bank tellers, cashiers, pizza makers, dog walkers, pre-school moms and the like I pass from day to day without "touching" any of them.



*Assistant Editor
Nora Edinger*

As the quote marks indicate, I'm not talking about a physical touch, although there are times when that could be an appropriate Christian gesture. I'm talking about the kind of touch that was shared between the New Testament woman who had a bleeding disorder and Jesus. Multitudes thronged about Him without any true touching taking place that day.

Only one shared a spiritual contact that left her restored and closer to God.

We are not the Savior and cannot expect the spiritually needy to seek us out individually with such fervor -- but each of us can be His hands on earth.

Let's try to do better this new church year in imparting some of His saving virtue into our multitude. It might not be a sermon or even an invitation to church, but let's find ways to share God's love daily. Maybe it will be through a smile, a note, a plate of cookies, a congratulations for a job well done, a thank you, some leaves raked or a heart-felt "I've been praying that you're feeling better."

We don't know how many days we have left to walk in this present multitude. Let's not waste any chance to reach out with His hands of love.

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