

The Perils of the Outer Court

by Brian Bailey

In Revelation 11 the Apostle John had a remarkable vision. In verses one and two he wrote, *“Then a measuring rod like a staff was given to me, and I was told, ‘Get up and measure the temple of God....But do not measure the outer court of the temple; leave it out, because it has been given to the Gentiles, and they will trample on the holy city for forty-two months.’”* In the Last Days this prophecy will have both a physical and a spiritual fulfillment, but in this article we will focus on its spiritual fulfillment.

THREE LEVELS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

To understand what this means we need to first consider the sections of the Tabernacle of Moses that the later temples were largely patterned after. These sections are the outer court, the holy place and the holy of holies. They speak of three spiritual levels that God’s people can enter into. The Apostle John in 1 John 2:12-14 further defined Christians in these three spiritual levels as little children, young men and fathers.

In these verses John said that the little children are those who know that their sins are forgiven. The outer court is spiritually the place where people are birthed into the kingdom of God. Just as all the Israelites were permitted to enter the outer court where the blood sacrifices were made, every believer spiritually enters into this level when they are born again by the blood of Christ. They become “little children” who know that their sins are forgiven. However, only some of the Israelites, the priests, were allowed into the holy place. This speaks of a greater level of maturity, and is only for the Christians who have matured into becoming “young men” who are strong and have overcome the wicked one. Yet from this spiritual level we should progress on into the holy of holies, where a father’s heart is produced within us and we know the Lord in a very intimate way.

THE PERILS OF THE OUTER COURT

In this article we want to consider the Christians who are spiritually abiding in the outer court. Those who can be called “outer court Christians” are saved but are spiritually immature. However, the Apostle John’s revelation shows that this is a place of great danger in the last days. The outer court of God’s temple will be given over to the wicked who will trample it down. This is why I have titled this message, “The Perils of the Outer Court.”

To understand this better, we need to recognize that during times of judgment the standards needed for God’s protection are far higher than at other times. When darkness covers the earth and God arises in judgment, the requirements we will need to be preserved will be far higher.

For example, Ezekiel 14 mentions to the times just before Jerusalem was trampled down by the Babylonians. God said in Ezekiel 14:20, *“Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as surely as I live, declares the Lord, they could not save their own son or daughter; they would save only their own lives by their righteousness.”*

Judgment was coming upon Jerusalem at this time. God said that even if these three godly men were in the city they would only deliver their own souls. In a time of great judgment the requirements to qualify for protection are far higher than at other times.

Now I want to look with you very carefully at Zephaniah chapter 2, because the Lord has quickened it to me as a warning for the days in which we live.

In the first two verses it says to God’s people, *“Gather yourselves together... before the decree brings forth, before judgment comes.... before the day of the Lord’s anger comes upon you.”* Here the Lord is giving us a timetable. He says that in times of judgment it is too late to prepare to avoid it. In other words, we have to prepare the church before the time of great darkness. You do not make an ark when the floods come, that is too

late. Noah's ark had to be carefully prepared before the flood came. And the burden that God has given me for our days is this: that before darkness covers the earth, we who are leaders need to prepare the church.

OUR NEED TO PREPARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD

We have to make these things very clear because the majority of God's people are not theological students. They do not thoroughly read the Scriptures and are dependent upon leadership to guide them. So leadership must sound a clear trumpet call. Leaders, we are responsible for looking after the people, and we have to be very careful what kind of message we preach. Just saying that everything is going to get better and better will not help the people to prepare. The Lord made it very clear in Matthew 24 and in many other scriptures that darkness and judgment will increasingly fill the earth before His Second Coming. We need to understand and preach this to present ourselves as workmen *"that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,"* 2 Tim.2:15.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, He said that if they had only known the day of their visitation He would have gathered them as a hen gathers her chicks. But because they did not receive their visitation and were not prepared, Christ declared that Jerusalem would be destroyed, Lk.13:34-35 & Mt.23:37-38. Yet how many churches today will be in the same condition and will miss their time of preparation and visitation? We need to prepare our people for the difficult days that are coming, *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God,"* 1 Pet.4:17.

I have recently seen in a vision some of the things that are coming upon the earth. It was overwhelming. And I realized that the majority of the church was not prepared for the days that are coming. But that responsibility rests on the leaders. It is for the leaders, the shepherds, to bring their flocks into the right pastures where they will grow properly. Only this will cause them to mature and spiritually move out of the outer court into the holy place. That is where security is. In the outer court there was no covering or protection, only in the holy place and the holy of holies.

The holy place typifies the level of the young men in Christ, the overcomers, and that is where we have to lead the outer court Christians. In the book of Revelation all the promises to the churches are specifically given to the overcomers. Leaders, what is to be our joy and crown of rejoicing on Judgment Day? The Apostle Paul said it is our congregation, 1 Thess.2:19. But will we receive that crown if we leave the members of our churches as spiritual babies that are unprepared to overcome in these last days?

There was a famous evangelist who was reproved by God because all he was doing was producing spiritual babies. Babies are important, but if they only remain babies, they are not going to stand in the times that are coming upon us. It is our responsibility to ensure that the members of our congregations grow in grace and become well able to stand strong through the difficulties that will increase upon the earth. We see this so clearly when Christ warned of the last days, that *"because sin shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold,"* Mt.24:12. He was not talking about the unbelievers, but the Christians. This should be our concern, that our congregations could become cold because sin will abound. I recently had a very disturbing conversation about a Bible School in America where over 50% of the students are living in immorality or other grievous sins. Where are they going to stand in the Day of Judgment? They have already been overcome by corruption.

HOW TO PREPARE GOD'S PEOPLE

So where should we go? Where should we direct our people? What is going to enable them to stand in the days that are coming? Let us go back to Zephaniah chapter two and look at the next verse. There we are clearly told what our people should do before judgment comes: *"Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth who have done His justice. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. It may be that you will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."*

The Lord is saying here to seek righteousness and meekness. He is speaking to His people that if we seek these two things, *"It may be that you will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."*

In Luke 21:36 the Lord said about the last days, *"...pray that you may be counted worthy to escape the things*

that are coming upon the earth.” But in Zephaniah 2:3 we are told what we should pray for righteousness and meekness in order to qualify. We are to help lead our people into these two things.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

As we look at the theme of righteousness, in Psalm 24:3-5 we read, *“Who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart.... He shall receive the blessing of the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”* To move on from the outer court and enter the holy place we have to cry out for a pure heart. King David prayed, *“Create in me a clean heart, O God.”* Our natural hearts are desperately wicked and therefore we have to cry out to God for cleansing, Jer.17:9. Yet the reward of gaining a clean heart is that we shall receive righteousness from the God of our salvation and will stand in His holy place.

One of the things we notice so often missing in God’s people is moral purity. We cannot overemphasize the need to triumph in every area in our life, so that we might have a pure heart and receive righteousness from the God of our salvation. Give a trumpet call to your people and tell them that they need to move on past the outer court. They have to come into the holy place, the place of overcoming. We need to teach our people how to overcome and be righteous in every area of their life, by the grace of God.

To move into the holy place we must mature from being spiritual children into becoming the young men who are strong and have overcome the wicked one. How can righteousness bring us into this overcoming strength? Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. And how can we receive the great joy that will make us very strong? Psalm 45:7 says, *“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy above your companions.”* So who receives the greatest joy? Those that love righteousness and hate wickedness. The greatest strength to overcome will be given to the most joyful Christians, who receive their great joy through their righteousness. As Hebrews 12:2 says of our Lord, the Righteous One, *“...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.”*

THE FUTURE JOYS OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF GOD

We must see, as did Christ and the Apostle Paul, that the light afflictions of this present life cannot be compared to the glory and great joy that lies ahead. It will be worth it all if we can see Jesus and have Him say to us, *“Well done, good and faithful servant!... Enter into the joy of your Lord,”* Mt.25:21. It is for all eternity.

I want to give you an example of a reward and joy that a leader can obtain. We had a pastor who died, and a sister had a vision of this pastor entering heaven. An angel took the pastor to a large hall. They were many hundreds of people there whose lives had been impacted by the pastor. The angel stood there with a crown, and one by one the people came up to the pastor and thanked him for the different ways that he had helped them. As they came, each had a jewel that they then gave to the angel, who then placed it in the crown. After they had all come and the crown was filled with precious jewels, the angel put the crown upon the head of the pastor. Then the pastor looked at the angel and asked him if he could see Jesus. That request was granted, and the pastor knelt down, put the crown at His feet and said to the Lord, *“It is all because of You.”*

Leaders, your congregation is to be your crown of rejoicing. Are you going to tell them the truth and prepare them for the days that lie ahead? Zephaniah says, *“...before the decree comes forth, before the day of the Lord’s anger, before...”* Are you going to tell your people and put them upon the pathway that will cause them to be worthy to escape the things that are coming upon the earth? Point them to Zephaniah 2:3 and tell them there are two things to seek earnestly after, righteousness and meekness. Bring them out of the outer court into the holy place, to become overcomers that will be strong and triumphant over the wicked one.

BEFORE YOU PREPARE OTHERS, PREPARE YOURSELF

If you travel on a plane they will always give you safety instructions before you leave. Part of what they say is that if there is an emergency during the flight, the oxygen masks will be released. If that happens, they tell you to take your own oxygen mask first, put it on, make sure the oxygen is flowing to you, and then help the

children or the others beside you. But the thing they emphasize is this, you must first put your own oxygen mask on, do not seek to help someone else until your own oxygen mask is on. This is because the oxygen must first be flowing to your own lungs before you will be able to help others. Spiritually it is so important for leadership that before you try getting somebody else on the right path, you have to make sure you are in the right path yourself. Leaders, you have to have these things worked out in your own lives first. The Lord Jesus taught that whoever will *do* the commandments and teach them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven, Mt 5:19. Therefore the truths we preach and teach must first be worked out in our own lives so that then we may bring these experiences into the lives of others. Its important o remember this because so many have failed by neglecting this simple truth. Before you try to lead others into righteousness, make sure that your own life has become righteous. You put your own oxygen mask on first, and then you can help others. In other words, you have to experience the truth before you build it into your people's lives. Make sure that you become an overcomer who has victory over sin. So many leaders neglect that simple directive, with the result that many have crashed.

TEACHERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Once we are personally experiencing this, it is important that we next become teachers of righteousness and help prepare the others. Everyone is a teacher to some extent. We teach our friends, our younger relatives, our children. You might be a Bible study or Sunday school teacher, and you do not know what results you might gain from your students. There was a woman named Nelly Reagan, and in her Sunday school class was her 11 year old son. She led her son to the Lord and taught him God's ways. At 15, he became a teacher in the same Sunday school class. At 17, he became the youth leader in the church. Many years later, he became the President of the United States. As president, Ronald Reagan said, "I do not govern the United States, the Lord Jesus Christ does." He was responsible for overcoming and helping to bring down the Communist Soviet empire because of the strength that he had through Jesus Christ.

You do not know what future leaders may mature through your teaching. A pastor recently introduced me to his church. He said that 23 years ago, he was my student in Bible school. Today he is pastoring 5000 members. You do not know the impact that your life is having upon others. What an impact Nelly Reagan had upon the world just by disciplining her own son!

Perhaps some of you are discouraged because of your failures. Consider how King David was restored to righteousness after his fall. After his restoration he had a far greater impact upon his generation and the ones that followed. Samson is another person that fell, but he came back to overcome mightily. As Isaiah 33:23 declares, "*...the lame shall take the prey.*" Hope in God! He can restore you and make you a great tree of righteousness that can stand against every storm. Seek God's righteousness and meekness so that you will become a strong protection for the young as you lead them onwards from the outer court into the holy place.

MEEKNESS

The second key to be protected in judgment is meekness. Only two people are called meek in the Bible, Moses and the Lord Himself. The Lord Jesus said, "*I am meek and lowly*" in Matthew 11:29. During the time that Aaron and Miriam challenged Moses about his authority, the scripture in Numbers 12:3 called him the meekest man in all the earth. That was what God said about his servant Moses when He chose to protect him from this uprising. This is the virtue that we are encouraged to seek God for, so that we will also be protected in the day of our trouble. Therefore we need to cry out to God and focus on meekness. "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,*" Mt.5:5.

When the Lord Jesus said this in the Sermon on the Mount, He was quoting from Psalms 37:11. This entire verse reads, "*But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*" In times of great trouble the meek will enjoy the peace of God that passes all understanding. While others in the Last Days will seek in vain to find peace, the meek will be enjoying this most precious of God's

gifts.

Meekness can be defined as a holy acceptance of all circumstances and situations that have been sent our way or permitted by God. It is manifested in a quiet and controlled spirit. It is not provoked, nor does it move in reaction to outward circumstances. It does not pity itself, but is shown in a disciplined life-style that considers the needs of others above its own. Meekness is the quality of spirit spoken of in Proverbs 21:1. The heart of a truly meek person is so pliable in the Lord's hands that He can turn him, like water, in whichever direction He wants.

Many people consider *meekness* to be the same as *weakness*, but this is not so. Meekness is strength under control. An illustration of this can be seen in the description the bride was given in Song of Solomon 1:9, where she was described as "...a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." A company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots speaks of a disciplined meekness, where these strong horses were trained to fully obey the directions of their master.

To further explain the principle of a meek spirit, let me relate a personal story. A number of years ago the Lord was speaking to my wife and I that we should start walking in the Spirit. He said, "I do not want you to do anything before you ask me." This sounded very good. We were pastors at that time, and we were going through a difficult period, as pastors often do. About this time we received an invitation to a seminar in a nearby city. We thought that this was just what we needed, but then we remembered that we must ask the Lord. When we did, His quick reply was, "No, I don't want you there."

Then the Lord gave me a vision. He showed me a young horse. The horse was in a corral, and was continually running up to the gate and back again, then up to the other gate and back again. The master saw this, opened the gate, and the young horse bounded out to run happily away. When evening came, the horse came back to the corral but the gate was now shut to him. The vision stopped right there. The Lord said to me, "If you keep desiring to go your own way, I will allow you to have what you want, but you will not get back in the corral again. You either stay under my training or leave- the choice is yours." The real issue God was teaching me was meekness. I was not to tell the Lord what I wanted to do, but learn to follow what He wanted.

How does this apply to us? Just as the horses that pull a king's chariot have to be very meek and be under the complete command of their master, we must learn this same discipline in our spiritual lives. As we gain a meek spirit, when we go through difficulties we will not react to them out of our own strength or wisdom, but by the direction of God. As the difficulties around us multiply in these Last Days, the need for us to have meek, disciplined spirits will also be greater so that we can overcome the dark days when they come. As Psalms 25:9 teaches us, "*The meek He will guide in judgment; and the meek He will teach His way.*" And as we have already seen from Zephaniah 2:3, let us be diligent to "*Seek righteousness, seek meekness. It may be that you will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.*"

WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE COMING DAYS OF TROUBLE

Zephaniah 2:3 shows us the keys to help us qualify to escape the things that are coming upon the earth. This is not promised to every Christian, for the scripture says that *maybe* we will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. The outer court believers will be overcome when the wicked will tread the outer court under their feet, but Christians who are spiritually abiding in the holy place or the holy of holies will be covered. Even the construction of the temple shows this truth, as the outer court had no protection from the wind and storms, but the holy place and the holy of holies were both covered.

So I want you to put these thoughts before you. I trust that we understand from God's word that darkness and judgment are going to increasingly fill the earth until the Second Coming of Christ. Yes, there will also be revival and world evangelism, but it will be during times of deepening darkness, Is.60:1-3, Mt.24:13-14, & Hag.2:6-7. We are not preparing the people if we just tell them that things will get better and better, or that the church will be raptured before any troubles come. You had better be careful as to what you teach your people.

I met a dear old saint many years ago named H.A. Baker. He had a marvelous revival in his orphanages in China in the 1930s. He warned his people of the great troubles that soon came upon China through Mao and

his revolution. But the other pastors taught their people that they would be safe; that they would be raptured before any trouble came. Yet when great troubles came, the Christians were not caught up. The congregations that were not prepared were destroyed because they were not taught the truth. But H.A. Baker's congregation had been prepared to trust God and overcome, so they were protected by God.

A trumpet is sounding in Zion. Darkness is going to cover the earth. If we understand that the immature Christians who are spiritually abiding in the outer court will be overcome, how can we protect them? As leaders we have to direct them to safety. What is safety? Developing these two specific aspects of Christian maturity: righteousness and meekness. That is clearly what Zephaniah is saying.

We have an awesome responsibility to understand the days in which we live, so that before these things come to pass, we can prepare our congregations. And of course, before you can lead others into righteousness you need to make sure that you yourself have become a righteous, victorious Christian.

After recently experiencing this vision of the last days, my deep desire is for the church to stand strong in the days that will come. The days that are left to me on the earth I want to spend caring for the church more than I have ever done before. I want to make sure that the church will be protected; that our congregations will become overcomers who spiritually move into the holy place and even the holy of holies. I want to see the pastors and leaders leading their people onwards from the milk of the word into strong meat, or mature teachings, so that they will stand in the days of adversity. And my prayer is that this concern will also become your deep desire. Those who practice righteousness and teach righteousness are going to have a wonderful eternal reward. Beloved, it will be worth it all.