

OT LESSON #42
“I WILL WRITE IT IN THEIR HEARTS”

Jeremiah 16,23,29,31
by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: A great deal has been said and written in recent months by Church leaders about the need to get the gospel deeper into the hearts of the people. I believe that modern Israel is as righteous as Israel has ever been, but listening to ten hours of conference in October (especially President Hinckley’s final talk) has convinced me that we can do better. We seem to know a lot of the questions about the gospel, and many of the answers, but some of us may have missed the power of real conversion. Benjamin’s people, generally faithful members, heard their king speak and experienced a mighty change of heart. You may remember what Abinadi said to the priests of Noah.

And now I read unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts . . .
(Mosiah 13:11).

These men were scholarly enough to quote Isaiah, even to try and challenge Abinadi on doctrine, but they did not have the commandments *written in their hearts*.. But the Lord says that one day he will have a generation that will have his law in their hearts. I believe he was speaking of us.

1. JEREMIAH FORESEES THE LATTER-DAY GATHERING OF ISRAEL.

If you could watch the Old Testament event of your choice, which one would you select? The creation? The gathering of the animals and the loading of the ark? The declaration of the 10 Commandments by the voice of God from Mt. Sinai? The destruction of the Assyrians at the walls of Jerusalem?

I have tried to imagine the dividing of the Red Sea. Could the Israelites see fish swimming behind those towering walls of water? Was the ground, after having been soaked by millennia of water, really *dry*? Did it require a special act of courage for the Egyptians to pursue Israel between those lethal, towering, liquid barricades?

Anyway, Jeremiah observed (or at least prophesied of) an event from our days—an event that in his opinion would eclipse every other for drama and importance.

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks (Jer. 16:14-16).

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land (Jer. 23:7,8).

It must have been a great joy for Jeremiah to see a day when Israel would arise and shine forth. He had not seen any of it in his day. Notice these verses from the beginning of Jeremiah 23.

WOE be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD (Jer. 23:1-4).

Jeremiah knew about wicked shepherds (priests). He was told at the time of

his call that he would have to stand against the priests of the whole land (see Jer. 1:18).

He lamented that

The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit (Jer. 2:8).

In that same chapter he said that the priests of Israel would be ashamed (Jer. 2:26). In chapter 13 he promised to fill the priests, the kings, and the people with drunkenness (vs. 13). In a later chapter he declared that Jerusalem (her priests and others) had provoked him to anger.

And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction (Jer. 32:32).

Near the end of Jeremiah we read this frightening prophecy:

Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together (Jer. 49:3).

That rebellious, destructive attitude of the pastors and priests would change in the last days, when God would gather his people again and give them priests that would feed them.

And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD (Jer. 31:14).

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15).

The gathering that would accompany this re-emergence of Israel as a great

spiritual power would be conducted by *hunters and fishers*. The following two paragraphs are from last week's lesson:

Behold, *I will send for many fishers*, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will *I send for many hunters*, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks (Jer. 16:14-16).

It is my impression that in Jeremiah's day, most fishing was done with nets. And many people who have *fished for converts* used nets, like Peter and John and Andrew. They were not interested in a fish or two. They wanted multitudes. Wilford Woodruff in England; Dan Jones in Wales; Zebedee Coltrin in Winchester, Indiana—they were all fishers, baptizing hundreds. But *after* the fishers, the Lord would send for many hunters. Hunting is more precise work. You don't usually hunt a heard, You hunt individual animals, "from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."

The call for fishers and hunters has gone forth. Over 60,000 have responded with full-time service. Have you responded? Have you been hunting or fishing lately?

2. GOD WILL WRITE HIS LAW IN THE HEARTS OF HIS PEOPLE.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34).

Part of this passage speaks of a time when we will not need to teach our neighbors about the Lord because “they shall all know [him], from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”

The D&C teaches that one purpose of the restoration is so that “every man might speak in the name of God the Lord” (D&C 1:24). And the book of Moses tells us that righteousness will cover the earth like a flood!

Righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth . . . (Moses 7:62).

Jeremiah, speaking of this wonderful time in yet another chapter declared

Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished (Jer. 30:10,11).

This report of a time when there will be a renewed heart in Israel appears other times in the scriptures:

Ezek. 11:19,20—“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezek. 36:26,27—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

CONCLUSION: We must give our hearts to this work. Helaman gives us the pattern for making this sacrifice.

Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God (Hel. 3:35).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin spoke of this in October Conference.

And one day, we will fully see through the darkness into the light. We will understand His eternal plan, His mercy, and His love.

"When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

Perhaps as members of the Church trust with all their hearts, transform their hopes and beliefs into action, and seek to align themselves with the will of the Lord, the answer to the question the Savior asked 2,000 years ago will be a resounding "Yes, He will find faith. He will find faith among those who take upon themselves His name. He will find it among those who are living His divine principles" ("Shall He Find Faith on the Earth?"; Sunday Afternoon, October 6, 2002).

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