

To the Law and to the Testimony

Introduction:

1. As was stated in recent studies, it is a common tendency for people to allow their feelings to take priority over the word of God, and to follow feelings instead of the sacred scriptures.
2. However, the tendency to turn aside from the word of God and to follow something else, is not limited to this time period in human history. Such has, for the most part, characterized the human family throughout the history of man upon this earth.
 - a. To a large degree, that which was true of the Israelites during the time of the Judges (cf. Judges 17:6; 21:25) is still characteristic of people in general.
 - b. Thus there has always existed the need for people to recognize that God's thoughts and ways are higher than our thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8-9), and to submit to the high thoughts and ways of God.
3. The tendency to turn aside from the word of God and to follow other so-called "authorities" was especially prevalent during the time of the prophet Isaiah.
 - a. Hence, as might be expected, Isaiah sought to direct the people of his day to the word of God. This was especially evident in his appeal to the people to turn "*to the law and to the testimony.*"
4. Lesson title: "To the Law and to the Testimony."
5. Text; Isaiah 8:16-22.

Discussion:

I. Background Information.

- A. The time period.
 1. He labored as a prophet during the last days of Uzziah (790-739 B.C.), Jotham (739-731), Ahaz (731-715), and Hezekiah (715-686), Isaiah 1:1. Note also 2 Kings 15-20.
 2. During this time Assyria was growing in power under Tiglath-Pileser, who had conquered the small nations that dotted the Mediterranean coast, along with Israel, and much of Judah.
- B. Condensed outline of the book of Isaiah.
 1. Judgment from God, chapters 1-39.
 - a. Prophecies concerning Israel, Judah, foreign nations, etc.
 2. Comfort from God, chapters 40-66.
 - a. Deliverance from Babylonian Captivity, chapters 40-48.
 - b. Jehovah's suffering servant, chapters 49-57.
 - c. The glory of the Messianic age, chapters 58-66.
- C. The Situation – Apostasy of God's people!
 1. God's people were unfavorably compared to oxen and donkeys, Isa. 1:2-3.
 2. They had "*provoked*" God, Isa. 1:4.
 3. They had become so evil that God even resented their worship, Isa. 1:11-15.
 4. The "*faithful city*" had become a "*harlot*," Isa. 1:21.
 5. Jerusalem and Judah had "*stumbled*" and "*fallen*" because their "*tongue and their doings*" were "*against the Lord*," Isa. 3:8.
 6. Some of their prophets taught "*lies*," Isa. 9:15.
 7. Many of the people were "*rebellious*," and urged the prophets to "*prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits*," Isa. 30:9-10
 - a. In addition to these, there were those who were urging the prophet to "*seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter*," and who "*seek the dead on behalf of the living*," Isa. 8:19.

II. Examine the Text, Isaiah 8:16-22.

- A. "*Bind up the Testimony*," Isa. 8:16-18.
 1. It seems that God is instructing the people to bind up the testimony of the prophet (bind it in a roll, or upon their hearts), whereas Isaiah said "*I will wait upon the Lord*," v. 17.
 2. "*I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel...*" v. 18.
 - a. Isaiah – his name means "Jehovah Saves."
 - b. His children:
 - (1) Shear-Jashub (7:3) – his name means "a remnant shall return."
 - (2) Maher-Shalal-Hash-baz (8:3) – his name means "speed the spoil."

- B. *"To the Law and to the Testimony, Isa. 8:19-22.*
 - 1. The people had turned from God to mediums and wizards (Isa. 8:19; 2:6.
 - 2. To such a people Isaiah was to direct them to God, *"to the law and to the testimony,"* v. 19-21.
 - 3. When the Assyrian flood passes through the land, the people who had rejected God and His word would *"be enraged and curse their king and their God,"* and be *"driven to darkness,"* v. 21.
 - a. Hard times were coming – coming because they had forsaken God and His word!

III. Application.

- A. There are many parallels between then and now!
 - 1. There are an abundance of people whose *"tongue and their doings"* are *"against the Lord,"* Isa. 3:8
 - a. People whose speech and conduct are *"against the Lord."*
 - 2. Many so-called "prophets" today are prophesying *"lies,"* Isa. 9:15
 - a. I say "so-called prophets," because the gift of prophecy has ceased, I Cor. 13:8-10.
 - b. Think of the number who have set dates for the return of the Lord, and have been proven wrong each time!
 - 3. Multitudes want preachers to *"speak unto us smooth things,"* Isa. 30:9-10, and become upset when a preacher actually heeds the instructions of Paul to Timothy, 2 Tim. 4:1-4!
 - 4. Amazingly, we still have *"mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,"* and who *"seek the dead on behalf of the living,"* Isa. 8:19.
 - 5. In both the Old and New Testaments God spoke plainly against such.
 - a. Ex. 22:18, *"Thou shall not suffer a witch to live."*
 - b. Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Isa. 47:12-14; Rev. 21:8.
- B. In America and the world today, there is an abundance of:
 - 1. Fortune tellers – who predict information on a person's life.
 - 2. Astrologers – people who claim to be able to predict the future by the movement of the heavenly bodies.
 - 3. Practice astronomy – claim to be able to predict the future by the movement of the stars.
 - 4. Practice Augury – claim to be able to predict the future by the flight of birds.
 - 5. Claim to be clairvoyant – have special spiritual vision of other people's inner self.
 - a. "Clairvoyants have a booming business advising Philadelphia bankers, Hollywood lawyers, and CEO'S of Fortune 500 companies."
 - 6. Are palm readers – claim to be able to tell your future by the lines in your palms.
 - 7. Mediums – people who claim to be able to contact the dead on behalf of the living.
 - 8. People who religiously read their daily horoscopes (a chart of the 12 zodiac divisions of the heavens showing the relative position of the planets by which astrologers claim to be able to foretell events in the daily lives of people).

IV. *"To the Law and to the Testimony," Isa. 8:20.*

- A. We are living in *"perilous times,"* 2 Tim. 3:3.
 - 1. Modern churches, in many instances, are becoming more and more apostate.
 - 2. God has been largely divorced from our educational system.
 - 3. Humanism, to a large degree, has become our "state religion."
 - a. Standards have become relative. Good and evil are no longer absolute in many quarters.
 - 4. Evolution is in; God is out!
 - 5. The whole idea of responsibility to God is more and more rejected.
 - a. All of this has led to frustration, hopelessness, unrest, dissatisfaction, anger, and protest.
- B. The answers to the questions of life are found in the Bible!
 - 1. It is the word of God, I Cor. 2:10-12.
 - 2. It is inspired of God, 2 Tim. 3:16.
 - 3. It is true, John 17:17.
 - 4. It is complete, John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3.
 - 5. By it we shall be judged, John 12:48; hence, by it we should live.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Bible contains the answer to every really important question of life. To it, we must turn!
- Bobby Witherington, Dec. 6, 2015

