



What a week. I am glad it is the Sabbath, not that the week was dreadful, but it was a solid week of prayer and study. It is quite apparent that God is speaking louder as time goes by. Perhaps He is getting our eardrums ready for a trumpet blast that will deafen most of mankind. This is a bit different format from what is usually shared, as a visual reference sometimes can pierce the thickest of skulls, mine at least.

We have been discussing character, heart, contrite spirit and growing in the image of Christ for quite some time. This week's Bereans emphasized these qualities as well. Lack of faith, an attitude of Cain, repentance, working our own salvation with fear and trembling and loving and serving one another fit the theme being emphasized.

In reading this week's essay and the article, it caused the light bulb to flicker a bit and a look at "house maintenance" stuck out. Not only as the place where we live,

but *how* we live. It was becoming clear; the focus is on the individual and our relationship with God. Where have we heard that before?

It is so often said, “we need to do this, or we need to do that, or we should be doing this or that,” well pardon me in changing the wording a bit, “I need to this and I need to that.” It is time to take the mouse out of our pockets and stand alone before God and seek Him for what needs to be completed *in us* in our walk with Him. Forgive me for being blunt and I am not being selfish, but the time has come to get out of our comfort zones and realize where we are and **Who** we are walking with. Me first, I am front row center (we did a lesson on this last year). I always tell Andrea; I need the most work. With the mileage I have on me it is no wonder. My odometer has gone around a couple of times and is now broken. None of us know just how many miles we have left so a spiritual overhaul may be in order.

Haggai 1:7- “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Consider your ways.”

All of the suggestions we have read this week and the theme conveyed, really has been one of looking at our spiritual conditions again and our relationship with God.

They serve as a warning of where I need to be. This too brought something to mind regarding scripture.

We know of the warning in the Bible and the end time prophecies in Matthew.

Matthew 24:5-8- “For many shall come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ’; and they shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See *that* you do not let *these things* disturb you. For it is necessary *that* all *these things* take place, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in *different* places. Now all these *things are* the beginning of sorrows.”

What will take place before these things? He will begin to get His House in order.

1 Peter 4:16-18- “Yet if anyone *is suffering* as a Christian, he should not be ashamed; but let him glorify God because of this, For the time *has come for* judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it first *begins* with us, what *will be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous are saved with much difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and *the sinner?*”

How will He begin the task? By sifting and trying the hearts of those He has called. If you think recent trials or upsets were mere coincidence, stop deceiving yourself and see it for what it may well be.

1 Peter 4:12-13- “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you which is taking place to test you, as if some strange thing were happening to you. But to the degree that you have a share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; so that, at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice exceedingly.”

James 1:2-7- “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything. However, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach *the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him. But let him ask in faith, not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*. Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.”

How can anyone expect to receive something of value from Someone who does not know them, unless it is that prince from Kenya who wants to give us millions on the internet...

God taps us on the shoulder, gently at first but the more we refuse to submit, the harder the tap until finally He will knock your feet out from under you or worse. I know first hand, cancer has a way of sounding an alarm with NO snooze button. Wake up and get out of bed, it is time.

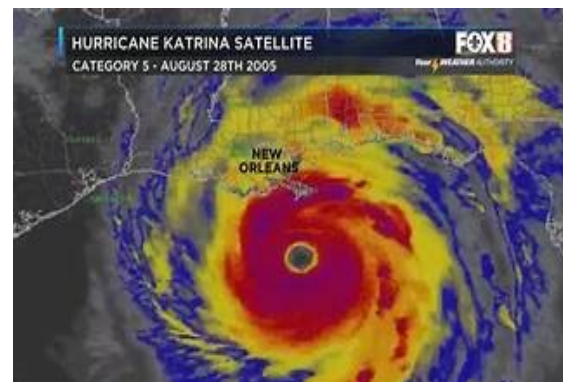
Isaiah 30:27-28- “Behold, the name of the LORD comes from far, burning *with* His anger, and in thick uplifting *of smoke*; His lips are full of fury, and His tongue like a devouring fire. And like an overflowing stream, His breath shall reach to the middle of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity. And a bridle *will be* in the jaws of the people, causing *them* to go astray.”

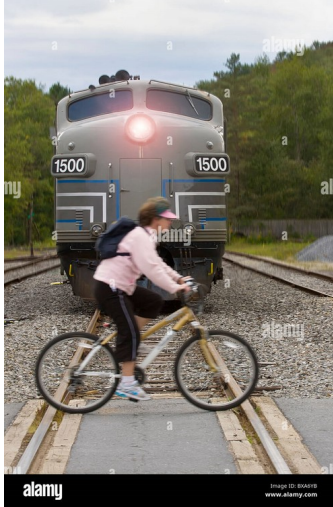
Amos 9:8-10- “Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; except that I will not completely destroy the house of Jacob,” says the LORD. “For lo, I will command, and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations, as one shakes with a sieve, yet not a grain

shall fall *to* the earth. All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘The evil shall not draw near, or confront us.’”

Hebrews 4:12-13- “For the Word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit, *and* of both *the* joints and *the* marrow, and *is* able to discern *the* thoughts and intents of *the* heart. And there is not a created thing that is not manifest in His sight; but **all things are naked and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account.**”

You might be wondering by now, what the dickens do these photos have to do with anything. They are self-explanatory. They all exemplify failing to heed warnings.





Mt. St. Helens erupted on May 18th, 1980, 44 years ago. A huge bulge grew on the side of the volcano and yet there were people who tried to get close. One old man refused to evacuate from his lake house. When a cubic mile of earth was vaporized and sent skyward, he and his house were never seen again.

The same Einstein mentality existed in New Orleans with the approach of Hurricane Katrina, a category five hurricane, no prep, let us loot instead. Idiots on bikes and suicidal drivers in cars will rush around flashing lights and crossing gates

to beat the train, just so they can get home or to the store a few minutes early, maybe not at all. The last photo could just be because someone cannot read... In any case, I am sure the meaning has been communicated. How much more important can warnings be when they concern our eternal salvation? Either we are not listening, or we are plain stupid, and we know that cannot be fixed.

Jeremiah 5:3-4- “O LORD, *are* not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have destroyed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, “Surely these *are* poor; they are foolish; for they do not know the way of the LORD, *nor* the judgment of their God.”

Revelation 3:15-20- “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing;’ and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich; and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed;

and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”

Having God’s full and undivided attention is not always what we would want.

Trust me, **it will come if He is talking, and we are not listening.**

Hebrews 10:30-31- “For we know Him Who has said, ” ‘Vengeance *belongs* to Me. I will recompense!’ says *the* Lord.” And again, “*The* Lord will judge His people.” **It is a fearful thing to fall into *the* hands of *the* living God.**”

He will not punish those who seek Him with all their hearts. He is a God of love but the other side to that coin is, He is also a God of wrath. He is a jealous God (**Exodus 20:5**) and wants nothing between Him and us.

Psalm 2:11-12- “Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath can flame up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.”

Aside from loving God first which is the greatest commandment, submitting ourselves to His will and way is critical to our walk towards His Kingdom.

According to Dictionary.Com, submit means: “give over or yield to the power or authority of another (often used reflexively). Synonyms are resign, agree, obey, bow, comply to defer to another’s judgment, opinion, or decision.

It does not infer slavery or bending over backwards and losing any identity. It should include harmony and peace as well, not conflict. Biblical submission is willful compliance and cooperation, yielding to the will of God.

1 Peter 3:1-9- “Likewise, *you* wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if any are not obedient to the Word, through the behavior of the wives they may be gained without a word, Having witnessed your chaste behavior *carried* out with reverence; Whose adorning, let it not be the external adornment of braiding the hair, or wearing gold *jewelry*, or dressing in *costly* clothing; But *let your adornment* be the inward person of the ***heart***, *manifested* in the incorruptible *jewel* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great value in God’s sight. For in this way also the holy women of the past who hoped in God adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands; Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; and you are her children, *if* you are doing what is right, and are not frightened by any intimidation. Likewise, you husbands, dwell with *your wives* according to

knowledge, as with a weaker vessel, giving them honor as women, and as joint heirs of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be cut off. Now the goal *is that* all of you be of one mind, sympathizing, loving the brethren, compassionate and friendly; Not rendering evil for evil, or abuse for abuse, but instead a blessing, knowing that you were called to this: that you should inherit a blessing.”

Submitting to God’s will and way of life will yield the peace so many people desire in their lives but it does come with a price. It requires us to put others before ourselves. We are not to condone sin within our ranks, regardless of who it may be. The example Paul sets to the Church at Corinth is to the point.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2- “*It is commonly reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—allowing one to have his own father’s wife. You are puffed up and did not grieve instead, so that he who did this deed might be taken out of your midst.*”

Condoning sin within is turning a blind eye and becoming a respecter of persons.

1 Corinthians 5:4-6- “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, together with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ To deliver such a one to Satan for *the* destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may

be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

If we ourselves condone this conduct by anyone, we in fact are becoming respecters of persons and committing sin.

Proverbs 24:23- "These things also *are* for the wise: To have respect of persons in judgment *is* not good."

Proverbs 28:21- "To have respect of persons is not good; yea, for a piece of bread a man will transgress."

James 2:8-10- "If you are truly keeping *the* Royal Law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you have respect of persons, **you are practicing sin**, being convicted by the law as transgressors; For *if* anyone keeps the whole law, but sins in one aspect, he becomes guilty of all."

God is not a respecter of persons, and neither should we. People usually treat people differently if they are wealthy or of some fame. More often, it is because

they may receive a benefit from doing so or do not want to offend anyone. Who would you rather offend, man or God? There is an easy choice.

Jude 1:16-20- “These are complainers *and* critics, who are walking after their own personal lusts, *while* their mouths are speaking great swelling words, flattering persons for the sake of advantage. But you, beloved, remember the words that were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; Because they said to you that in the last time there would be mockers, who would be selfishly walking according to their own ungodly lusts. ***These are the ones who cause division; they*** are psychic, not having the Spirit of God. But you, beloved, be building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,”

We are the house, the temple that God is concerned with. It is our construction that is underway. We all need maintenance on a regular basis. What better source do we need than the Master Carpenter and His word and example He set for us to follow? You will not find Him in the sermon of a Sunday church or a book by a Baptist Preacher. You will only find Him by being broken and on your face in repentance before Him.

1 Corinthians 3:16-20- “Don’t you understand that you are God’s temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him because the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God’s sight*. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God for it is written, “He entraps the wise in their own craftiness.” And again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.”

As we are growing according to God’s will and word, His grace will be upon us. If you are realizing His grace appears to be absent, **look at yourself as to why**. It goes back to the condition of your heart. We have covered this in “Beatitudes” from Matthew 5. They are sequential building blocks for building character and a godly demeanor.

Realizing we are poor in spirit and acknowledge honestly and with understanding our spiritual poverty before God is the footing. Mourning is godly repentance that leads to our being humbly compliant with the will of God, laying a foundation. When we become compliant with the will of God, we will hunger and thirst for righteousness, which is an intense longing after God, His Holiness, and His

lovingkindness. Understanding and desiring to have the attributes of God will cause us to be merciful. We will have mercy in our judgments of others as God had mercy on us. Stacking one of these “Beatitudes” upon the other in order, will yield a pure and contrite heart. It is this heart God seeks in us and we will see Him. We become the “peacemakers,” and we will become His sons. These are the building blocks to construct our Temple God’s way.

It is difficult to jump to one without building on the other. Jesus began by setting the conditions for establishing the desire for God and the proper heart first. Blinded by pride or a hard or unbroken-hearted person will ***not*** understand. Christ wants the pieces we bring. This is the building of His Temple in us His way. This is vital to receiving God’s grace.

James 4:6-12- “But He gives greater grace. This is *the* reason it says, “God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble.” Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist *the* devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners, and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded! Be grieved and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into grieving, and your joy into mourning. ***Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.*** Brethren, do not talk against one another. The one

who talks against a brother, and judges his brother, is speaking against *the* law, and is judging the law. But if you judge *the* law, you are not a doer of *the* law; rather, *you* are a judge. But there is *only* one Lawgiver, Who has power to save and to destroy. Who are you that you presume to judge another?"

I say these things aimed at me, but not just me, all of us. If I fail the flock, judgment is harsher on a shepherd. God protects His sheep and Christ paid for them with His life. It is serious business to tend a flock for God. It carries a strict set of guidelines and consequences for those who fail.

Jeremiah 23:1-4- "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture," says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, God of Israel, against the shepherds who feed My people, "You have scattered My flock, and have driven them away, and have not taken care of them. Behold, I will bring upon you the evil of your doings," says the LORD. "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them again to their fold. And they shall be fruitful and multiply. And I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them. And they shall fear no more, nor be afraid; nor shall they lack *anything*," says the LORD."

Ezekiel 34:2-7- “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you kill the fat ones, but *you* do not feed the flock. You have not made the weak strong, nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up the broken. You have not brought again those that were driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost; but you have ruled them with force and with cruelty. And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd. And they became food to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill. Yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none searched nor sought for them.” **Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD,**”

Avoiding God’s wrath and judgment is outlined in His word. Knowing it and living by every word of it will **keep us out of danger**. As important as these scriptures are to the shepherds, they are equally significant **to each individual servant of God**. They will support all of us in the maintenance and building of our temples.

Job 22:21-23- “Now agree with Him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come to you. Please receive the law from His mouth and lay up His words in your *heart*. If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up; you shall put away unrighteousness far from your tabernacles.”

This lesson should have been titled “Dear Bob,” as most all of them should. But if your heart and mind are set on pleasing God and not man, they are welcome words to live by with every breath He gives me. We know danger is all around us, some more than others, and it will only increase. Opening our hearts, minds and ears to what God is saying to us will guide us safely to where we need to be.

1 Peter 4:7-13- “Now the end of all things has drawn near. Therefore, be serious-minded and be watchful in prayers; But above all, have fervent love among yourselves because love will cover a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. *Let each one, according as he has received a gift from God, be using it to serve the others as good stewards of the grace of God which manifests itself in various ways. If anyone speaks, let it be as the words of God; if anyone serves, let it be as from the strength which God supplies; so that in everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to Whom is the glory and the power into the ages of eternity. Amen.*

BL-05/11/24