

JULY 12, 1992

## SEEK THE LORD

Why do people have to learn things the hard way? Take the situation of "drinking and driving." For years law enforcement agencies and certain religious groups have pointed out the dangers of such practices. More recently, other groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Students Against Drunk Driving have organized to raise people's awareness of the problem. Amazingly, those that manufacture alcoholic beverages have been emphasizing the dangers. In spite of all the information, statistics, and warning people still drink and drive. It is estimate that 10% of all driver on the road are impaired by alcohol and that at certain times, such as Friday and Saturday nights, the percentage is even higher. We still find that about 50% of all auto accident fatalities are related to drinking and driving. Some people have to learn things the hard way.

This phenomenon is not new, it has been around as long as man as been around. Every generation experiences it; however, the price of learning things the hard way is pretty high at times. The nation of Israel learned this and the world in which we live is seeing and will continue to see that the judgment will come to those that ignore the warning signs of danger. Many of the Old Testament prophets were engaged in warning people of the danger of their actions and life-styles and the consequences of not doing what is right. The consequences of sin is judgment from God; however, we also see that God is willing to forgive and to restore His people if they will turn back to Him.

Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk. He lived in the time of great upheaval in his own nation as well as the other nations in that part of the world. God had send many prophets to try to get His people to turn away from the danger and the destruction to which they were headed.

ZEPHANIAH 1:1-3 Zephaniah could trace his ancestry back to king Hezekiah who was one of the good rulers in a series of bad kings that Judah had over several generations. He was a distant relative of young king Josiah who had recent come to the throne of Judah but who had not introduced the reforms that likely delayed judgment day for the Jews. The bad leadership that Judah had resulted in the people getting into idol worship and practices that of the rich taking advantage of the poor and the strong taking advantage of the weak. Because of their continual disobedience God's judgment was coming on the nation and this judgment will eventually come to all mankind. The first part of Zephaniah's prophecy spoke to the ultimate judgment that would come on the world. In words that could have applied to the world in the days before Noah, God sent His message to all who will listen. In this coming judgment, nothing would survive not man or beast. The wicked people of that day had stolen from those that could not protect themselves, but after the judgment, all their possessions would be nothing but rubble and a stumbling block for them.

ZEPHANIAH 1:7,12 Even though judgment was to come to all the world, judgment was going to begin with God's own people. So many times, we really get upset with God in that He does not bring judgment on the wicked of the world and the reason that judgment does not come is that God is waiting for His own people (that's us) to repent before beginning the judgment.

There are multitude of peoples with many voices that are trying to be heard. There are many philosophies and ideas about what is right and wrong. Our nation is divided over many issues and even our church denominations are are split over such issues as the authority of the word of God. Voices are clamoring for our attention as they try to sway our thinking in such matters. One of the days, the command is going to be given to "Be silent!" One of these days, it is not going to matter what you or I think about an issue for only what the word of God says will have any impact or matter. We might want to practice that right now; that is, to just be silent and let God's word speak to us.

Judgment is coming and in the case of Judah, it would as if the Jews would be offered up as a sacrifice. The judgment would be at the hand of a nation that God had raised up for that very purpose. The nation of Babylon was the invited guest.

The thoroughness of the judgment was to be such that even the things that are hidden in the darkest corners would be searched out with candles and lamps. Judgment would come not only to those that were openly wicked, but also to those who had become complacent -- those that were resting on their laurels and were just passing through life as if God did not matter. There are people who do not believe that God is interested in our lives. They think that God just started the world our and wound it up like a clock and it is just running unattended.

ZEPHANIAH 2:1-3 Even as judgment was being predicted, there went out a call for repentance. There was still time for the people of Judah to escape the coming judgment if they you but repent. Zephaniah called the people to come together and seek the Lord before it was too late for them.

Even if all the nation did not turn back to God, then there was hope offered for those that would repent and try to do what was right. It would mean that people would need to abandon their pride and their wickedness and in doing so they could find protection in the day of judgment that would come to Judah.

We see time and time again that God's judgment did not come on His people without adequate warning. Just as Israel and Judah had a special calling to be God's people, so do we as members of the Body of Christ. God expects us to be involved in what He is doing in the world and not just sit back and have no influence on the world around us. That influence is to be a positive and righteous one that we do with humility and gentleness toward those who are lost.