

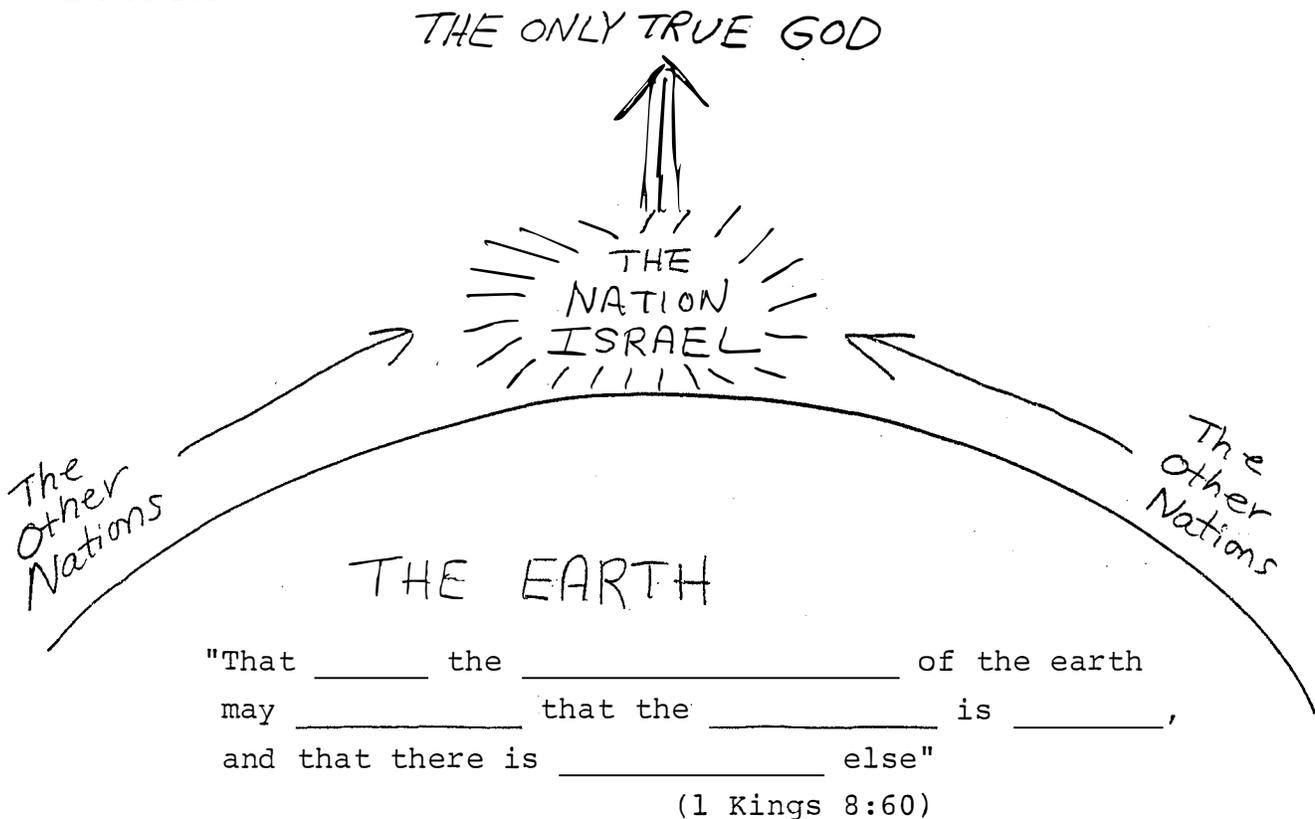
CHAPTER 12

LEARNING FROM ISRAEL

God wanted the nation Israel to be His faithful witness and to point clearly to Him so that all the nations of the world would know that He is GOD--"ye are my _____, saith the LORD, that I am _____" (Isaiah 43:12). Israel was meant to be God's "MISSIONARY NATION" and we studied this in Lesson 2 of these notes.

Israel failed to be the kind of witness God wanted them to be. This nation did not turn out to be the kind of nation God intended. God wanted this nation to shine very brightly in this dark world (as a candle), but the light became dimmer and dimmer and was finally put out. God wanted this nation to point very clearly to Himself (as an arrow), but as the years went by the arrow pointed more and more away from the Lord.

God chose the nation Israel for a very special reason. God placed this nation in the middle of the world and God wanted this nation to be a SIGNPOST that would point very clearly to the only true God. God wanted all the peoples of the world to look at the nation Israel so that they would come to know Israel's God:



As we have studied, the nation Israel was a strong witness for the LORD during the early days of the reign of King Solomon (see Chapter 2). People from other nations came from far and wide to see the greatness of Solomon's kingdom and to see the greatness of Solomon's God (1 Kings 10:1-9). The Queen of Sheba was so impressed by what she saw that she even BLESSED THE LORD (1 Kings 10:9)! Is this true today? When people today go and visit the nation Israel do they go away saying, "BLESSED BE THE LORD THY GOD!" ? No, this is not the case today, but it once was.

Since the time of Solomon the nation has gradually gone downhill and has gradually lost the powerful testimony that it once had. When the Lord Jesus came into this world the situation was much different. The nation was only a mere shadow of its former self. The nation was very small and puny. Most of the Jewish people lived in other countries and in other parts of the world. Many Jews were carried away from the land by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Other Jews were carried away from the land by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. and even earlier. God used these nations to judge His people because of their sins. Finally in 538 B.C. a small group of Jews returned to their homeland under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua (see the book of Ezra) and the rebuilding of the nation began. However, this nation never regained the greatness which it once had.

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth, did the Jewish people receive Him and welcome Him or did they reject Him (John 1:11)? _____ Did they want Him on the throne or did they want Him on the cross (John 19:15)? _____
_____ Because they rejected the Saviour whom God sent, judgment once again fell on the nation. In 70 A.D. the Romans invaded the land and destroyed the city of Jerusalem and once again the Jews were without a homeland.

For centuries the Jewish people have been scattered among the nations of the world without any land they could call their own. Finally in the 20th century the modern state of Israel came into existence and once again there is a nation called "Israel" in the land of Palestine. Is this present day nation of Israel a strong witness to the Lord? The sad fact is that the nation Israel today is in almost total unbelief. The Lord Jesus Christ is not honored in that land today. There are some individual Jews who love Christ and serve Him and are true believers, but the great majority of Jews are blinded by unbelief (see Romans 11:25). Even though there are many religious Jews who talk about God and their Jewish faith, we must remember what the Lord has said, "He that _____ Me hateth My Father also" (John 15:23 and see the last part of John 5:23). Those who do not love and honor the Son of God do not really love and honor God. Today the nation Israel is not pointing to the only true God. The nation has failed as God's WITNESS.

Why did Israel fail? How did Israel fail? These are important questions to think about, because today THE CHURCH (made up of true believers, whether Jews or Gentiles) IS TO BE GOD'S WITNESS ON THE EARTH. Israel failed as God's witness on earth, and therefore the CHURCH needs to learn why and how this nation failed.

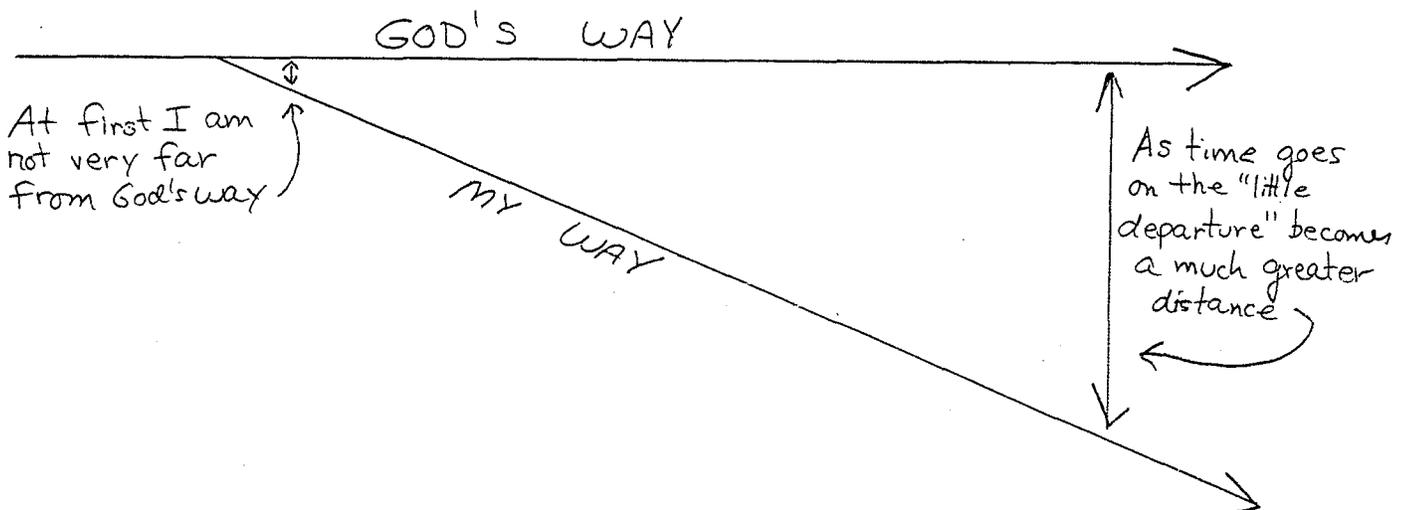
Little By Little

Israel's failure did not come all at once. It happened little by little over a period of hundreds of years. It is the little things that make the difference. The Jewish people were not careful about the little things and this is what destroyed this nation.

This is how sin usually works. It gets us little by little. Cain did not all of a sudden murder Abel (Genesis 4). It all started with a "little thing" of not bringing the kind of offering that God had told him to bring, and this was followed by another "little thing" of getting angry. His act of murder was a "BIG THING" that followed these "little things."

As Christians we need to be careful about the "little things." God wants us to be "F _____ in that which is _____" (Luke 16:10). It is these "little things" that can really hurt the testimony of a church. It is the "little gossip" here and the "little dishonesty" here and the "little lukewarmness" here that all lead to the downfall of the church.

What are some little things that God wants your church to be faithful in? The little things are important. It may seem like you have only turned away from the Lord a little bit, but as time goes on the departure becomes much greater as the following diagram shows:



Entrusted With the Word

Did the Jews have any advantage? (See Romans 3:1) Did God give to them anything special? The answer is found in Romans 3:2--“Much every way: chiefly (first of all), because that unto them were _____ (entrusted) the oracles of _____.” The oracles of God” refer to the “sayings” of God or the Word of God. God had given the Jewish people a priceless treasure: THE SCRIPTURES, the very Word of God. God did not give His Word to the Egyptians, neither did He give it to the Babylonians or to the Greeks or to the Romans. The Word of God was entrusted to only one nation: ISRAEL.

It is a great privilege, but it is also a great responsibility to have the Word of God. Because this nation had possession of the Scriptures they were responsible to...

believe the Word of God

obey the Word of God

live by the Word of God in all that they did

teach their children the Word of God

Israel failed to do all of these things. In fact, Israel did such a poor job at possessing the Word of God that in the days of Josiah the Scriptures had been lost! Finally someone found the scroll (see 2 Kings 22:8-11). The finding of this scroll resulted in a great revival, *but the Bible never should have been lost in the first place*. What would you think if you were to walk into a church today and discover that the people that go to this church do not have copies of the New Testament and do not even now that the New Testament exists? How unusual this would be!

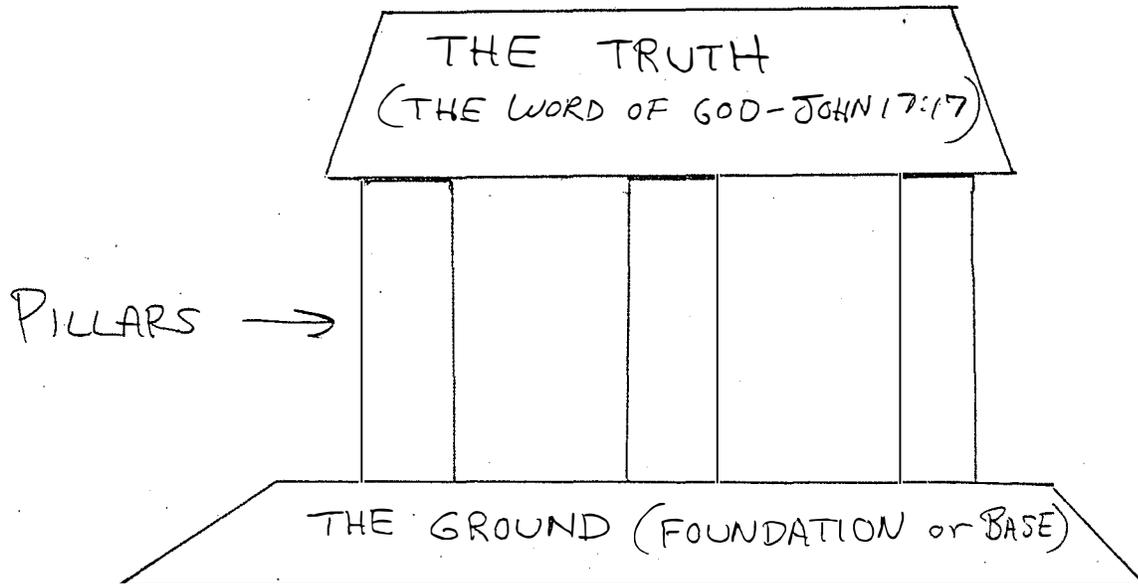
Today God has entrusted His Word, not to the nation Israel, but to the churches. We have been given a precious treasure: THE 66 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE. We are more blessed than Israel because we have been given even more books of the Bible than they were given.

What are we doing with God’s Word? What are you doing with God’s Word? Are you reading it? Are you believing it? Are you obeying it? Are you living by it? Are you sharing it with others?

Those who do not USE the Bible will LOSE the Bible!

Suppose you were traveling on a ship and suppose your ship was captured by the enemy. Suppose also that the enemy was to seize every Bible on the ship and destroy them. The only Bible left would be that Bible which would be in your head or in your mind. How much of the Bible would you have? How much of God’s Word have you stored away in your heart? Remember, no one can ever take away the Word of God which is in your heart.

The churches have a great responsibility. The CHURCH is to be “holding forth the _____ of _____” (Phil 2:16). The church is to be “the _____ and ground of the _____” (1 Timothy 3:15):



As the pillar and ground hold up the truth, so the church is to hold up the truth of God, the BIBLE. How do believers hold up the truth? Do we walk around carrying a Bible over our heads? No, we hold up the truth, not by carrying the Bible but by LIVING THE BIBLE (living it, speaking it, obeying it, etc.). Unsaved people need to see believers LIVING THE BIBLE, just as the nations of the world needed to see Israel LIVING THE BIBLE.

How can a person “hold up” the Bible in school? in the home? in the neighborhood?

Great Advantages and Privileges

God blessed the nation Israel in many ways. He gave them so much. They had all kinds of advantages and benefits and privileges. Some of these are listed for us in Romans 9:4-5:

1) ***THE ADOPTION***

The nation had a unique relationship with God (see Exodus 4:22-23).

2) ***THE GLORY***

The nation had the very presence of God in their midst (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11).

3) ***THE COVENANTS***

God had bound Himself to this nation in a special way (see for example, the New Covenant found in Jeremiah 31:31-34).

4) ***THE GIVING OF THE LAW***

No other nation had such a law (Deut. 4:8).

5) ***THE SERVICE***

See Hebrews 9:1,6,9. This refers to the priesthood.

6) ***THE PROMISES***

God had given this nation great promises, especially the promises that relate to the coming Messiah, the salvation that He would provide and the kingdom that He would establish.

7) ***THE FATHERS***

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and others. They had a great heritage!

8) ***THE MESSIAH***

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

God gave them much, but they threw it all away. All of these precious things meant very little to them.

To whom much is given much is required. Think of all that God has given to us today. Has God given you a special relationship to Himself (1 John 3:1)? Does God dwell in your midst, even in your body (1 Cor. 6:19-20)? Has God bound Himself to you in a very special way (John 10:28-30)? Has God given to you the Bible? Are you a priest (able to go directly to the Lord in prayer and praise)? Has God given you great and precious promises? Does Jesus Christ belong to you? Do you have a Bible believing church to attend? Do you have Christian parents to teach you? What else has God given you?

What are you doing with all these things? Are you USING them or ABUSING them? Are you taking full advantage of all the advantages? Are you benefiting from all the benefits? Are you being blessed by all the blessings? Do you count yourself privileged to have all the privileges? **THOSE WHO DO NOT APPRECIATE ALL THAT THEY HAVE SOON LOSE WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN.** This happened to Israel and it can also happen to you.

A Light

What is the purpose of a light or a candle (Matthew 5:14-15)? _____

_____ God's purpose for Israel was that this nation should SHINE before all of the other nations. What is God's purpose for the CHURCH (believers living today)? Does God want us to shine (Philippians 2:15 and Matthew 5:16)? Where do we get our light from (John 8:12)?

What keeps us from shining as we should? What helps us to shine as we should?

Being Different

The nation Israel had power as a WITNESS as long as this nation was DIFFERENT. The Jewish people were different from the other nations because **the Lord made them different**. This difference was meant to be clearly seen. The nation was told to be HOLY (set apart, different)--"And ye shall be _____ unto Me: for I the _____ am _____" (Lev. 20:26). Does God expect and demand that believers today BE HOLY AND DIFFERENT (see 1 Peter 1:15-16)?

Israel ignored the Lord and His Word. Soon they began to live and talk and act like all the other nations. As the other nations would look at Israel they would see no difference. They would see the Israelites living UNHOLY lives just as they lived UNHOLY lives.

Should believers living today be DIFFERENT from non-believers? How? In what ways? What happens when saved people act just like unsaved people? Is this a good testimony? Why not? How can a young person be different at school? Is there a difference between a young person being DIFFERENT (in a good way) and being ODD or STRANGE (in a bad way)?

Learning From Israel

The failure of the Israelites should be a serious warning to believers living today. The fact that they failed shows us that we too can fail if we are not careful. The fact that they went astray should be a warning to us that we can go astray too.

In 1 Corinthians 10:5-10, we learn about some of the ways the children of Israel failed. Does God want us to learn VALUABLE LESSONS from these examples (1 Cor. 10:11)? _____ The children of Israel lusted after evil things (1 Cor. 10:6 and see Numbers 11:4). Is it possible for believers today to lust after evil things? How? The children of Israel were idolaters (1 Cor. 10:7 and Exodus 32:6). Is it possible for believers today to be guilty of this sin? How? How do believers today put other things in the place of God and ahead of God?

The children of Israel committed fornication which means sexual immorality (1 Cor. 10:8 and see Numbers 25:1,9). Can believers living today fall into this sin? _____ The children of Israel put Christ to the test by doubting that He could really take care of them (1 Cor. 10:9 and see Numbers 21:1-5). Can believers today fall into this same sin? How? The children of Israel murmured and complained (1 Cor. 10:10 and see Numbers 14:2,37). Do Christians today ever do this? Why? When?

Should believers today think that they are “better” than Israel and even though Israel fell into sin this will never happen to them (see 1 Cor. 10:12)?

Do we need to fail (1 Cor. 10:13)? _____ God is F_____ (1 Cor. 10:13) even though man often is not!

A Faithful Remnant

As a nation Israel failed to be the kind of WITNESS they should have been. The nation failed, but in every age there were individual Jews who loved the Lord and who served Him faithfully even though the nation did not. Even in days when the nation was doing terribly spiritually, God had faithful men such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah. God never forgets the faithful few.

The last written book in the Old Testament is Malachi. At the time this book was written, were the Jews doing spiritually well or were they in a terrible spiritual condition (see Malachi 1:6-8; 2:8,11,17; 3:8-9)? _____ Even in the days of Malachi God had a faithful few: “Then they that _____ the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD _____ and heard it, and a book of _____ was written before him for them that _____ the LORD, and that _____ upon His Name” (Malachi 3:16). There were still some Jews who loved the Lord! The churches may not be shining, but YOU can shine! The churches may be failing, but you need not fail! **GOD IS FAITHFUL!!**