

The Lord's Plumbline

"Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel..." Amos 7:8

Builders use plumb lines to test whether walls are vertically upright or not. Although true built, God, through Amos, tells Israel, the northern kingdom, that He will test their spiritual uprightness with His plumb line — *"the word of the Lord"* (Amos 7:15)—and then judge those found wanting. Although they professed great faith, this plumb line caused Israel to reveal their own spiritual crookedness by the way they reacted to hearing the truth, *"They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly"* (Amos 5:10).

The northern kingdom was not always its own entity. It formed when differences of opinion between God's people caused the twelve tribes of Israel to split into two kingdoms: two tribes in the south and ten tribes in the north. The deciding issue revolved around Rehoboam's attempt to institute a strict, man-centered rule over the people, even though the elders counseled against such action. Consequently, the northern tribes broke away from the union, making Jeroboam their new leader. Fearing the loss of his following, Jeroboam cleverly created a more comfortable way of worship which pleased his many followers. This new way looked every bit as good as the old, perhaps even virtuous, but *"this thing became a sin..."* (1 Kings 12:30) because God still was not the center of worship. Although the southern kingdom, Judah, struggled with faith throughout its approximate 325 year history, the northern kingdom never reconciled with God, sinking deeper and deeper into unbelief over its approximate 210 year life. God's patience with Israel was running out, yet He made another call to them to return to Him through the preaching of Amos.

God's call, *"...Seek ye me, and ye shall live: But seek not Bethel, (for) Bethel shall come to nought"* (Amos 5:4-5), went unheeded. Not that Israel did not hear the call or that they did not know how to be reconciled to God but that they refused to answer God on His terms. Defiantly, they chose to follow the teachings of man: in this case, Jeroboam (plus his successors) who taught of an easier way. Outwardly, his teachings retained familiar worship traditions, *"Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the*

eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense" (1 Kings 12:32-33). Inwardly, even though this new way was like a breath of fresh air compared to the ungodly stringency of what was just left behind, it amounted to no more than sheer ritualized religious practice.

To their credit, the northern people correctly recognized folly in Rehoboam's demands, yet they utterly swallowed the ungodly slant of Jeroboam's way. For example, no longer was one required to bring sacrifices to the door of the tabernacle where sin was confessed and atonement was made by the priest sprinkling blood, and sacrifices, though still offered, were not offered according to scripture. Jeroboam tightened his grip on the people by training his own priests and by dismissing all others, *"For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD: And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made"* (2 Chronicles 11:14-15). The underlying reason for banning God-ordained priests from the pulpit was that the new way could not tolerate the truth, *"...the land is not able to bear all his words"* (Amos 7:10). Worship had been fundamentally changed from serving the living Lord to serving the Devil, and, sadly, the people did not recognize this change as a rejection of God.

The modern church is following much the same path as the northern kingdom where prideful hearts openly oppose the truth of God's Word, the need for confession of sins is diminished, lawful preaching is dying out, and those who feign faith have turned to "Bethel", that is, they have obtained their understanding from places in addition to the Bible. Scripture also says that the northern kingdom, besides rejecting all of God's commandments and serving other gods, most angered God by sacrificing their innocent children to the gods, *"And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire..."* (2 Kings 17:17). God was so very angered by this last act that He had to destroy Israel, using Assyria to do so, *"Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only"* (2 Kings 17:18).

Today, worldwide, the mind of man has become so corrupt as to once again sacrifice children. Daily, the unborn, in unthinkable numbers, are sacrificed on the altar of convenience—abortion. Because the "builder"

tested the wall of faith of Israel and found it wanting, the Day of Judgment for this present world cannot be far behind either, especially when we see these things happening as they once did. God once again is profoundly displeased.

Dear reader, the Lord's "*plumbline*" has not changed. Seek the Lord with all your heart according to His Word and not according to your desires while it is yet called today "*...for he will abundantly pardon*" (Isaiah 55:7). Tomorrow may be too late.

God's Peace,

Charles Korhonen

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH
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May 7	Ken McLachlan/Ken Storm	Holy Communion-Meal Following
May 14	Nathan Ruonavaara	
May 21	Charles Korhonen	
May 28	Chad Kuivanen	

Special Services:

May 5	Ken McLachlan/Jesse Mattson	7pm
May 6	Ken McLachlan/Charles Korhonen	7pm
May 7	Ken McLachlan/Ken Storm	11 am
May 7	Ken McLachlan/Paul Copponen	2pm

Winter Schedule: Sunday School/Bible Study 9:45am Church at 11am Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.

Looking ahead: June 4th will be our first Sunday of the Summer Schedule. Church begins at 10am.

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