

SPEAKERS

June 6 - Ken Storm

Holy Communion
Last day of Sunday School & Adult Bible Study until September

June 13 - Nathan Ruonavaara

June 20 - Ken Storm

***This service will be held in conjunction with the annual Sunday School Picnic at Twin Lakes State Park in Toivola, MI. There will be no service at the Tapiola Church and no broadcast of the service on June 20th*

June 27 - Paul Coponen

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Sunday Service - 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00 p.m.

Church Cleaning:

The Washuleski's

Website:

www.tapiolachurch.org

Location:

17602 N. Lake Ave., Tapiola,
MI 49916
(906) 334-2766

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UNBELIEF

Why do some people not believe in God, the creator of heaven and earth who one day will take all believers to heaven? Perhaps it's not that they have never heard of Him, but that they may have never answered His call to repent of their sins—in spite of what they may have heard. It might also be that those who are currently in unbelief had once believed in the Word but later came to embrace another way to heaven. Of course, it is also possible that some people never heard of God, only of other gods, never questioning what they heard. There are many other reasons for unbelief as well, one of which you dear reader may be so troubled, but the God of the universe assures us in His Word that there is no reason for anyone to be lost: He *"will have all men to be saved"* (1 Timothy 2:4). Let us, therefore, by God's grace, search His Word to help us focus on our question.

The Israelites, as God's only chosen people, certainly heard the Word of God but the book of Judges attests that not many of them believed. Before there were kings in Israel, God appointed twelve men and one woman over a period of about three hundred years to guide the children of Israel as they settled into their new land of Canaan. Each judge was especially skilled in running a country, both administratively and militarily, and was spiritually gifted in keeping the nation's eye on God. They were not prophets nor were they particularly pious individuals; they did not have the outward credentials of a capable leader; but, because God was with each judge, the people served the Lord and prospered. However, each time a judge died, the people quickly returned to their sinful ways signaling that, although they may have dutifully obeyed their leaders, they did not truly believe in God. The youth, in particular, as it turned out, only paid lip-service to the worship of God: *"there arose another generation...which knew not the Lord"* (Judges 2:10).

Even when Israel was governed by strong kings and the Word of God was openly preached, the people gradually grew more distant from God with each passing generation, cycling between national revivals and all out idolatry as prophets came and went. By the time Jeremiah arrived, most Israelites had turned their backs on God. No longer was the land experiencing spiritual revivals and awakenings. The nation was crumbling due to a lack of basic biblical morality. The people freely invoked the name of the Lord but trusted more in their earthly king than in their heavenly Father: *"And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely"* (Jeremiah 5:2). They became self-sufficient, thinking that they could solve their own problems, particularly with their neighboring enemies. Their shortcomings largely resulted from their elders losing sight of scriptural truths, out of which the youth grew to stubbornly reject His Word. As He had always done before, God brought tribulations upon Israel to bring them back into line, but this time He stopped listening to their cries: *"They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them...I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them...go, and cry unto the gods...but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble"* (Jeremiah 11:10-12).

Although God chose the children of Israel to be His people, He did not exclude the Gentiles from His love (Romans 9:24-25). It was Israel's mission to share the Word with the rest of the world so that all people would come to know the living God and have the same chance to be saved. The Bible provides numerous examples of Gentiles coming into the same faith as that of the Israelites. Perhaps the greatest awakening of Gentiles in the Old Testament occurred at the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. Jonah was called by God to preach to the Ninevites who served pagan gods and who had already begun to plunder the northern ten tribes of Israel. Understandably, Jonah resisted God's call, as many of us often do as well when faced with tough decisions, and ran the other way. Jonah eventually answered God but much to his utter dismay, Nineveh repented. He had not gone there to seek repentance, but to pronounce judgment! Similarly, the disciples of Jesus wanted fire from heaven to consume those who did not accept Him. As with Jonah, Jesus rebuked the disciples: "...Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:55-56). Jonah learned that it is not what he thinks of others but what God sees in them that matters: "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*" (Romans 9:15).

Today, we recognize the same conditions in the world as those just mentioned. Religion abounds where many people still attend worship services, when it fits their schedule, and they call upon God, when it occurs to them to do so. Church attendance has been on a steep decline for several generations now. Many of the youth hardly seem to believe in God, or care. And there are many who serve other gods, or no god at all. So, what are believers supposed to do? As God has always instructed; preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus, beginning with our own heart then on to others (Luke 24:47), for when God calls it is up to each individual to answer (Jeremiah 7:13). Hear our cry one more time, dear Lord.

*God's Peace,
Charles Korhonen*