

## NEWSLETTER

April - 2024

**Sunday Bible Study:** 9:45 a.m.

**Sunday Service:** 11:00 a.m.

**Wednesday Bible Study:**

7:00 p.m.

**No Bible Study April 3** (*please join us in person or on-line for special services*)

**No Bible Study April 10**  
(*Congregational Meeting*)

## SPEAKERS

**April 3 @ 7:00 p.m.: Services with Goran Esberg & Paavo Talonen**

**April 7: Ken Storm, Holy Communion**

**April 14: Ivan Niemela**

**April 21: Ken Storm**

**April 28: Charles Korhonen**  
*Potluck meal following the service*

## CONTACT

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## TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH

### **Life or Death**

*"I set before you the way of life, and the way of death" - Jeremiah 21:8*

A warning of a coming judgment from God was issued by Jeremiah the prophet to Judah, the Southern Kingdom, on account that they had rejected the teachings of God: they worshipped other gods and encouraged their people to commit unspeakable wickedness throughout their land. Some 100 years earlier the Northern Kingdom, known as Israel, faced a similar call from Isaiah, but they stubbornly refused to repent of their sins according to God's word and rushed headlong into an increasingly immoral and violent lifestyle. Patience eventually wore thin to where in righteous judgment God allowed Assyria to defeat Israel in battle and to nearly depopulate the land. Thus, all those people of Israel who chose "*the way of death*" by ignoring God's repeated calls through His prophets to return to Him in repentance would suffer both in this life and then in eternity to come.

One might think that Judah would have been ever so eager to listen to Jeremiah after being a firsthand witness to the devastating outcome caused by unbelief to their brothers in the north. They weren't. And, as alluded above, they actually surpassed Israel in wickedness: "*And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel*" (1 Kings 14:24). After numerous attempts to convince Judah to repent, God finally allowed Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to punish them by destroying their land and by hauling its people off into seventy years of captivity.

Both kingdoms showed hatred toward God by refusing to listen to His holy word in preference to following their own version of salvation, just as Adam and Eve did in trying to become like God. Despite being rejected, God displayed long-suffering and patience toward His people in two distinct instances. First, He invited Israel to return to Him from their exile in Assyria under one condition: "*Only acknowledge thine iniquity*" (Jer 3:13). Clearly, God was not asking them to somehow improve their lives through things like good works and observance of the law, but only to repent of their sins, as all else in life would then be handled by the indwelling Holy Ghost (Ezekiel 36:25-27). (They obviously did not favorably respond to God's invitation seeing that scripture does not speak of them after this point.) In the second instance, God made the same offer to Judah before their defeat to Babylon: "*ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein... We will not hearken*" (Jer 6: 16-17). Apparently, the general feeling amongst the Judeans was that their forefathers misunderstood the way of salvation and that only they themselves knew better; they had become wise like gods, it seems. Hence, Judah, like Israel, chose not to repent but to go deeper into sin. (Nevertheless, scripture points out that both kingdoms contained a remnant of believers throughout their long history of difficulties which is a hopeful message to all believers experiencing the ongoing tribulations of our day.)

As our nation goes deeper and deeper into sin, seemingly following the same pathway to destruction set by Israel and Judah many years ago, each individual alive today still has a chance to learn from these two examples to

reach out in repentance to God before it is too late—do not become wise in your own ways. Either one must recognize the signs of the time with its unlimited wickedness to be God’s call of coming judgment or we will ignore these signs and go on with life to our eternal damnation. We know how Israel “modernized” its worship practice after forming its own kingdom and of how Judah eventually followed suit. It seems that leaders at all levels of church and society in both kingdoms wanted to appease their people even at the expense of angering God, which mirrors the decision made by Adam and Eve to taste the forbidden fruit against God’s wishes. Although both kingdoms continued to worship God, they did it by cleverly discarding the need for scriptural confession at the door of the tabernacle all the while retaining other outward parts of their original worship, which pleased the people.

However, the Bible shows that the only way to be reconciled to God is through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on a penitent heart which covers all past sin with a robe of righteousness (Romans 3:25). To effect this forgiveness, Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to all believers on earth (Matt 16:19) saying, “*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained*” (John 20:23). Thus, you can with confidence “*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” (James 5:16) and then hear and believe by the grace of God that comforting gospel message proclaimed by another believer, “*Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*” (Matt 9:2). Because all people are sinners (Romans 3:23) in need of God’s forgiveness, each one of us has a crucial decision to make while it is called today: either choose “*the way of life*” or “*the way of death*”.

*God’s Peace,*

Charles Korhonen