



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 8

January 17, 2021

No. 3

## Familiarity Is Not Faith

Greg Chandler

Following the captivity of Israel by Assyria in 722 BC, Judah remained intact for several years. Unfortunately, during those years, Judah did not view the plight of their northern neighbor as a lesson from which to learn. Instead of recognizing the connection of Israel's sinfulness with Israel's ultimate demise, Judah continued to forsake the Lord and follow their own desires. The Lord, through Jeremiah the prophet, spoke of Judah's apostasy, saying:

*"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water."*

Even after Israel had been taken captive as a result of their sin, Judah continued participating in idolatrous worship, covetousness, rebelliousness, immorality and had no shame for their abominations. Judah's leaders failed to execute justice and exploited the fatherless and the needy. Judah's prophets proclaimed that no evil would come upon them, but that there would be peace.

Amidst the pervasiveness of evil, the people placed their trust in the false prophets and their own ways. Jeremiah — the true prophet of God — proclaimed:

*"Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord ....'"*

Judah had determined that the mere presence of the temple in their midst was sufficient to position themselves in good standing with the Lord God. In other words, because of their proximity to the temple, their familiarity with its structure, their ability to touch its columns and walk its porches was proof enough of their righteousness and guarantee of peace. Their mindset, however, was erroneous for Jeremiah records the judgment of God upon Judah, namely, destruction and captivity by Babylon.

Years earlier, before the kingdom divided, Israel engaged in a battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:1-10). Israel was defeated losing 4,000 men. When the people and the elders came together after the loss, they determined the reason for the defeat was because they did not have the ark of the covenant with them. They retrieved the ark from Shiloh, brought it to their camp, and then, reengaged the Philistines in battle. To their shame and dismay, Israel was summarily defeated, losing 30,000 men! And, the ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines!!

Do you recognize any commonality between Judah's perception of the temple and Israel's perception of the ark of the covenant? In both accounts, the people placed their confidence in the physical object (the temple, the ark), not a devoted confidence in God. Their religion had diminished into a shallow, hollow attachment to the Lord based solely on outward, physical, ritual activity and familiarity.

During Jesus' ministry, there was an occasion when someone asked Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" Jesus replied:

*"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say,*

*'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'"*

Those whom Jesus stated would say, *"We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets"*, fell into the same trap that Judah and Israel fell, namely, placing inordinate trust in the physical, outward objects of religion and not in true service and devotion to God.

It may be easy to see the fault of Judah, Israel, and those of whom Jesus spoke. These accounts are not preserved simply as human interest stories. Instead, they ought to constantly remind us to guard against succumbing to the same faulty reasoning and behavior. People can put their trust in ownership of a Bible, in church membership, in Christian parentage, in Biblical knowledge, in church attendance, in being baptized, and in numerous other outward, physical religious things and yet, not be in a proper relationship with God. Brothers and sisters, let's NOT fall into that trap! Familiarity is not faith. I encourage all of us to devote ourselves to serving the God of Heaven, our Heavenly Father, and love Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind. 

## Heaven, My Home

My father passed away over 23 years ago. Next week he would have turned 82. I have pondered and wondered many times about what life would have been had he been a part of my children's lives. Nickolas was 5; Simon was 2 and Bailey would not be born until the next year. I miss my father but when I can grasp the truth that I have a heavenly Father who has been a part of my childhood family's life, my wife's childhood family, our family's life and now our children's lives and the homes that they have established and Lord Willing will establish I find comfort.

God has been my Father in heaven since the day I was born again. He has been the constant in my life. When my father died, going home was not the same. My heavenly Father never dies and His home is in heaven.

The Scriptures call out and guide us to our heavenly home. The place where my Father dwells; the place where Jesus my Savior has returned and waits to come again to gather His own. Consider a few below.

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* John 14:1-3

*"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. **They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.**"* Revelation 22:1-5

We sing a lot of songs where we say, we long for home.

*Heaven Holds All to Me* – Tillit S. Teddlie

*Home of the Soul* - James Rowe

*I Am Bound for the Promise Land* – Samuel Stennett

*O Think of the Home Over There* – D.W.C. Huntington

*When All of God's Singers Get Home* – M. Roy & Lanier Stevens

Do you long to go home to see for the first time the face of your heavenly Father? From my perspective, heaven is the place to long for. It is our eternal home.

STACY