

Civil War
in the
American Church

A Prophetic Perspective

John Stone

Copyright 2023
By John Stone
www.firstaidforconverts.com
All rights reserved by the author.

Shiloh Valley Publishing
770 Ridgewood Road
Bassett, Virginia 24055 USA

Civil War
in the
American Church

A Prophetic Perspective

The Prophecy	5
Standing Men	6
Cannons of Love	10
Long War	16
Prodigal	30
City in Ruin	37

John Stone

*Now there was a long war
between the house of Saul and the house of David;
and David became steadily stronger,
while the house of Saul became steadily weaker.¹*

¹ 2 Samuel 3:1

The Prophecy

A prophet friend called at the close of 2021.² He had news.

In a matter-of-fact tone the prophet said, “John, a few years ago Jesus told me a time was coming when the American church would be divided into a state church and an underground church, like in China.”

Without changing his everyday tone the prophet added, “That time is now.”

My friend kept talking but I did not hear him. The moment he said “now” my spiritual eyes opened. I saw what the prophet was saying.

² Ron Campbell; www.soundthetrumpetministries.org

Standing Men

In the vision I looked over a plain. Across the plain hung an oppressive atmosphere. In the dimness I saw thousands of men. All the men were attentive to a great golden statue. The statue's face was threatening.

At a long, loud sound, the sea of men bowed to the idol like Muslims in prayer. But a scattered few refused to bow. As immovable as stone pillars, the few men standing stood their ground, facing the statue. As I looked, the Spirit gave me understanding.

The plain represented America and the darkened atmosphere, a time of fear. The time of fear was the covid crisis of 2020 and 2021. The men on the plain were American church leaders. Fear of the statue divided America's church leaders into two groups: one very large and one very small. I also recognized the statue.

Golden Statue

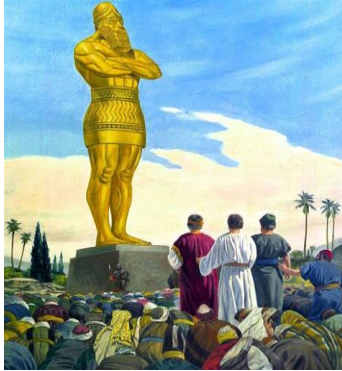
The golden statue was the same one King Nebuchadnezzar erected on the plain of Dura in Babylon of old.³ The statue is the god of government. In the days of Babylon, this idol stood for Nebuchadnezzar's government, but when I saw the statue it represented the U.S. government.

The gold of the statue was also ripe with meaning. The gold signified the financial advantages the U.S. government grants churches that receive governmental approval to operate.

When the U.S. government authorizes a church, that church conducts its business tax-free. In return for not paying taxes, each church operates in

³ Daniel 3

accord with the contract it makes with the government.⁴ The contracts do not require churches close their doors during a pandemic.



Loyal to The Lamb

Observing the few standing men, I knew they kept their church doors open throughout the covid crisis. Despite the government's pressure to close their doors, the standing men refused to lock God's people out of God's house.

God did not create the covid virus or the government's response to it, but He did allow the government's oppressive behavior to serve as a tool of judgment upon the leaders of His house in America.

The standing men feared neither man nor microbe. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego before them, they pledged their allegiance to the Lamb.⁵



⁴ When churches operate as tax-free 501(c)3 corporations, their political action is restricted.

⁵ Daniel 3

The faithful few standing men might lose the praise of men or they might lose their livelihoods. They might be imprisoned or martyred but they would neither yield to fear nor bow to any god but the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of the darkened atmosphere, the standing men's vision was limited. Most standing men could only see the intimidating statue and their bowing peers nearby. Almost every standing man felt he stood alone. Each standing man felt he braved this test of faith alone with God, and each passed the test with flying colors.

As my prophet friend continued talking, the vision drew me further in.

Throne of Government

Behind the sea of American church leaders, out of their sight, I saw Nebuchadnezzar's throne. Nebuchadnezzar's throne, I knew, represented the spiritual throne of government. Upon this throne sat the spiritual power behind the golden statue.⁶ Stretched lankily across the throne of government sat the dark prince. The dark prince was the spiritual power behind the U.S. government.

Dark Prince

The dark prince was dressed in purple linen. He wore leather sandals on his feet and on his head, a crown of gold. A wide leather belt encircled his waist. The belt was made from human skin. The sandals, too. He looked well over six feet tall and was imperially thin. His jet-black beard and hair were trimmed to perfection.

⁶ Ephesians 6:12

From his governmental perch the dark prince looked dismissingly upon the bowing multitude and then directed his eyes above. His black eyebrows arched with smugness.

As Satan sneered towards heaven, I heard his thoughts, thoughts, Satan knew, God could plainly hear.

Satan mocked, “I made Your leaders bow to me and it was easy to do.”

God did not reply.

Cannons of Love

Three months passed after hearing my prophet friend's word about the American church and seeing the vision of church leaders on the plain of Dura. Spring was around the corner. Driving through a melting March snow I took a visit to an Ohio church.⁷

Before the service began, as I sat among the congregants, I asked the Holy Spirit to show me what was going on in that place. I wanted to peek behind the curtain dividing the natural world from the spiritual. I wanted to see the spiritual truth of this group of God's people. The Holy Spirit answered my prayer. Suddenly the curtain between the natural and spiritual worlds parted and I saw the truth of that Ohio church.

I saw a vision of a house under construction.

House Under Construction

Before me appeared a concrete slab foundation. The foundation was sized for an average house. White and green pipes for plumbing along with electrical conduit lines and red and blue water lines protruded from the smoothed concrete surface. I saw a mason on the job.



⁷ Freedom Fellowship Church, Apple Creek, Ohio (www.wearefreedom.org)

The Mason

The mason was laying red brick around the foundation's perimeter. The mason's face was hidden under his weathered white hat and behind his black curly beard. Working steadily, the mason had more than half finished the first course. In some places he had laid two and three courses of red bricks.

The mason noticed me watching him work. From under his old work hat, through that thick beard, he smiled at me. The way his eyes twinkled I recognized the man. The mason was the Master Builder, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fortress

As I looked, the Mason and the house under construction disappeared. In their place a brick fortress appeared. A field of grass and wildflowers surrounded the fort. Dark woods lay beyond the field in all directions.

The brick fortress was complete in every way. Its design called to mind military strongholds constructed in the United States in the early 1800s. The fortress looked like a sister fort to Old Fort Jackson in Georgia, Fort Jefferson in the Florida keys and Fort Sumter in South Carolina.



Like those nineteenth century forts, the one in the vision was multi-sided. Its pentagon shape was five levels high. Rows of windows were evenly spaced around each level. The windows were gun ports. From each gun port stuck the muzzle of a black iron cannon.



Cannons

Staring at the fortress and its deadly cannons, I wondered how this spiritual vision could represent the physical church I sat in. I was puzzled how those massive weapons of war could be part of a congregation with pacifist roots.

“Lord,” I asked, “what are these cannons?”

“Cannons of love,” He replied.

“Ah,” I nodded.

Expedition

Then I saw the back of the fort. At ground level was a sally port with a thick timbered door that opened outwards. As I watched, the iron-braced door swung heavily open. Out of the door walked a group of eight youthful people wearing civilian clothes. Their faces shone.

The group's leader, a tall young man, was obviously in charge but he also seemed to be one of the group. Each person in the group had unique abilities appreciated by the others.

I watched how they walked with shared purpose and listened as they spoke encouragingly to one another. Together the young people crossed the field of wildflowers and headed into the dark woods beyond. As the team of pioneers entered the woods, I knew they would not return to the brick fort. They had been sent to establish a new stronghold.

The sent youths were trained. They possessed the tools required to accomplish their mission. When the young people built their new stronghold, they would incorporate the same strategic and tactical strengths found in the fortress they left behind. They could do it.

If an enemy force coming against them was too strong, the great fortress stood ready to send the support needed to help them stand firm and prevail.

In order to fail, these spirited trail blazers would have to implode with mutual distrust or envy. I did not see how an outside force could overwhelm them.

Military Patrols

Moments after the expedition of eight disappeared into the woods, a different group exited the woods, returning to the fortress. In the returning group's midst limped a wounded man. Two of the young people helped the hurt man along. The man was appreciative for their help, and the young people were glad to help him. The hurt man wanted to enter the safety of the fort. Like a military patrol, this spirited group remained vigilant for danger even as they walked under the protective guns of the fort.

As the returning patrol approached the sally port door, yet another group exited. The two groups passed each other, waving with friendly shouts. The outbound group of young people, like the returning group, was off to search for wounded people, gather information on enemy activity in the area and then return to the great fortress.

All the bright youths I saw looked like civilians but moved and communicated with obvious military training. While the patrolling groups were qualified to accomplish their missions, they did not seem as professionally mature as the first group I saw, the group being sent to establish a new military stronghold.

Small groups of these young civilian-soldiers, I knew, were constantly coming and going from the fortress. The groups I saw had such high levels of *esprit de corps*, unity and joy, that I wondered what life was like inside the fortress. I was not allowed to see. Pondering life inside the great fortress, the vision ended when the church service began.

The Mason's Eyes

When the service concluded, I cornered the lead minister.⁸ The minister was dressed like a man who was also a craftsman. He had deep eyes and a black bushy beard. I had one big question for the man.

“Did you close your church doors during covid?”

I silently wondered if one could command a spiritual fortress like the one in the vision and at the same time yield to fear and bow to government.

The leader took a slow breath and looked into my eyes.

He replied, “I was seriously considering closing the church doors. I was in prayer about closing when God said to me, ‘Don’t you dare! I’m birthing something here and if you shut down the church, you’ll kill it. You’ll be guilty of partial-birth abortion.’ ”

“So that settled it,” the leader stated, “the church stayed open.”

After hearing what he said and observing his determined manner, I related to him the vision I saw concerning his church. I described the house under

⁸ Urie Hershberger; Freedom Fellowship Church; www.wearefreedom.org

construction, the Mason and the great fortress with all its comings and goings.

The man's eyes twinkled like the Master Mason's when he heard about the cannons of love.

Long War

Seeing What He Says

Three months passed after visiting the church where God was birthing something new. It was June 2022 and it was summer. One bright morning I asked the Lord Jesus what was on His mind.

Jesus replied, “Read Second Samuel chapter three.”

*“Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David became steadily stronger, while the house of Saul became steadily weaker.
...”*

The words seemed as lifeless as last year’s leaves.

“Lord, I don’t get what you’re saying.”

Jesus did not respond.

The next morning I asked the same question and Jesus answered the same as the day before.

“Read Second Samuel chapter three.”

Dutifully I found the passage and began reading, searching again for the new thing He was telling me.

*“Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David became steadily stronger, while the house of Saul became steadily weaker.
...”*

The words were as dry as dust. All of them.

“Lord, I know the story. I don’t see what you’re saying.”

Jesus was silent.

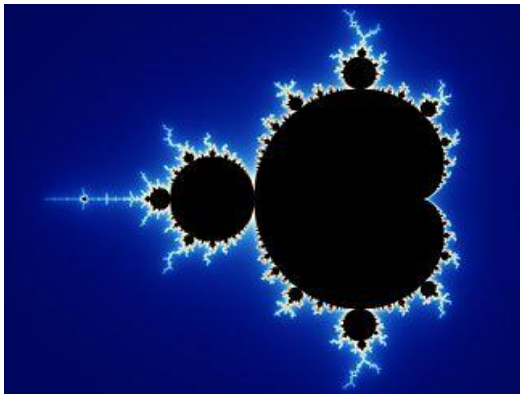
⁹ 2 Samuel 3:1

Third Day

The third day came and with it the same question and again the same answer. But this time was different. This time when I looked at the passage, the words on the page pulsed with life. Suddenly I saw what Jesus was saying.

“Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David became steadily stronger, while the house of Saul became steadily weaker. ...”

As I read, I did not see words on a page. I saw pages in the words. Revelations blossomed before me like the mathematical Mandelbrot set, like flowers forever blossoming on flowers, ever deeper, evermore beautiful.¹⁰



Plotting the Mandelbrot Set

Gazing into the spiritual depths of Second Samuel chapter three, I saw how God allowed our government’s covid response to divide the American church into two parts, the larger part coming under the control of the state and the smaller part, the part refusing to bow to earthly authority, becoming

¹⁰ The Mandelbrot Set is a repeated mathematical equation; when plotted it reveals an infinitely exquisite boundary. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandelbrot_set;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mandelbrot_sequence_new.gif

the underground church, just like in China, just like my friend prophesied over the phone during winter.

Seismic Event

In the spiritual realm, God's dividing the church was as seismic an event as an earthquake cracking the continental United States in half. Imagine the Mississippi River basin suddenly deepening a thousand feet and widening another fifty miles, and creating a sea in the midst of America no bridge can span. That is what the division of the American church was like.

While some may have difficulty seeing it now, as time progresses, this division of the American church between the state church and the underground church will become increasingly clearer.

For the church in America there is no going back to the way things were before covid. The gulf between the state church and the underground church is as fixed as the span between heaven and hell. While church leaders who bowed to government may repent and come into the underground church, there is no undoing what God has done. God judged the American church because she refused to judge herself.

Before covid, the American church was satisfied with compromise. Before covid, the church was comfortable with corruption. It tribalized instead of unified. It split instead of bonded. It minimized sin and cheapened grace. God judged His church because she refused to judge herself. She tolerated compromise and refused to pursue purity and holiness. She refused to love the Lord God with all of her heart, with all of her mind, with all of her soul and with all of her strength.¹¹ Despite repeated warnings, like the five foolish virgins, she saved something of herself for herself; she refused to spend all of herself on God.¹²

¹¹ Matthew 22:37

¹² Matthew 25:1-13

“But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.”¹³

The result of God’s judgment upon the American church has already brought radical results. Think about a ship’s navigator swapping his faulty magnetic compass for a finely tuned GPS. With accurate coordinates, the navigator turns the ship’s wheel onto the right course, and the ship’s captain smiles. Like a giant aircraft carrier turning at sea, it will take time to see the radical results this course change has brought, but our course has changed. Everything has changed for the American church.



We needed this course correction. We were headed in the wrong direction. We needed God’s judgment. We refused to judge ourselves. His judgment is His mercy. The mercies of the Lord endure forever because His judgments are lasting.

“For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.”¹⁴

House Divided

¹³ 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 NASB

¹⁴ Hebrews 12:6 ESV

As I read Second Samuel chapter three that summer morning, I also saw what is happening inside the American church after God's judgment. This is what I saw.

The Spirit showed me a state house with two great halls or wings. The two multi-storied halls connected in the middle. At the connecting point stood a magnificent white dome. The dome housed the throne room of God.



The hall extending to the left of the dome is led by men spiritually akin to King Saul. We can call this hall, the Saul wing. The second hall, the hall extending to the right of the dome, is led by men with the heart of David, the David wing.

Both halls are part of God's house and both halls are populated with born-again Christians, or with, you might say, true Israelites.¹⁵ Whichever wing people currently reside in, they all belong to God because all dwell in God's house.

The Saul wing remains for now quite large and the David wing, tiny. But that will change. Everything about the church is changing. Following the judgment that came through covid, the American church will never be the same again.

¹⁵ Romans 11:24

Saul Wing

Before covid, like King Saul, leaders in the Saul wing of God's house fought and won great kingdom victories.¹⁶ Like King Saul, these leaders prophesied by the Spirit.¹⁷ They fortified the kingdom.¹⁸ Spiritually speaking, they built a professional army.¹⁹ And like Saul, importantly, they were anointed by God to lead His house.²⁰

But Bible students know there is another side to King Saul. And this other side, the dark side, also shares character traits with today's leaders in the Saul wing. I saw this too.

When forced to choose between (a) obeying God's command to "let the little children come to me and do not hinder them" or (b) submitting to civil government and locking the church doors to keep the people of God away from God, they chose the latter.²¹ They bowed to a pagan government and locked the Father's children out of their Father's house. Like Saul, when push comes to shove, leaders in the Saul wing prove they fear man more than they love Christ Jesus.²²

When the time arrives to stand and fight to uphold God's commands, church leaders in the Saul wing hesitate.²³ They count the cost.²⁴ They will neither put their lives on the line for Jesus nor lay down their lives for His sheep.

"He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."²⁵

¹⁶ 1 Samuel 11:1-11, 14:6-23, 15:1-9

¹⁷ 1 Samuel 10: 11-12

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 13:2

¹⁹ 1 Samuel 13:2, 14:52

²⁰ 1 Samuel 9:16-17, 10:1

²¹ Matthew 19:14

²² 1 Samuel 15:24

²³ Matthew 19:14 ESV

²⁴ Genesis 3:1

²⁵ John 10:12-13 ESV

Avoiding Deadly Conflicts

When the cost of fighting to keep God’s laws appears too steep, church leaders in the Saul wing appease the enemy.²⁶ They compromise. They find a way to find some middle ground.

Leaders from the Saul wing save their lives instead of hazarding all for Christ Jesus.²⁷ Like King Saul, they do not totally trust God. Never laying down their whole lives for Christ Jesus, their faith remains perpetually imperfect. Their faith in God is like their love for God— ‘almost all.’

“After all,” Saul leaders reassure themselves, “God is love, and love covers a multitude of [my] sin.”²⁸



Avoiding war when it is time for war gives ground to the enemy. Peace at all costs is costly. While there is a time for peace, there is also a time for war.²⁹ But not for leaders in the Saul wing.

Leaders in the Saul wing refuse to root out evil in their own denominations. They refuse to confront half-truths in their own churches. They allow unholiness in their own homes.

²⁶ Luke 14:28

²⁷ Luke 17:33

²⁸ 1 Peter 4:8

²⁹ Ecclesiastes 3:8

They make peace with the enemy because the cost of fighting such fights, they fear, is not worth the potential loss. If they fight, they reason, then they might lose their life, which is God's very point in calling us to fight such battles.³⁰

Church leaders in the Saul wing refused to lay down their lives in hopes that others might find life, so in mercy God judged them. And this judgment is final.

Battlefields

Across the arc of American church history, battlefields the sons of Saul have avoided dying on include church government, roles of the sexes and now, whether a pagan government has authority over God's church. God has been patient with America's church leaders. His judgment has been a long time coming.

For two-and-a-half centuries the house of Saul has taken a slow-motion tumble down the mountain of God, finding no rest until it hit rock bottom. Unrepentant compromise does that. It brings man down from his high calling and lands him in a pigsty.



At the bottom of the muddy slope of compromise these sons of Saul all share one thing in common: Each one bowed to a pagan government.

³⁰ Matthew 10:39, 16:25

Each one locked the Father's children out of the Father's house. Each one feared man (or microbe) more than he feared God. Each one feared losing something of himself more than he loved God or God's children. Each one of these sons of Saul refused to fight for God's household when it was time to stand and fight. Ultimately they were cowards, distrusting God's strength to see them safely through the battle.³¹

Even flawed Samson when the Spirit was upon him, found the courage to stand alone against a thousand Philistines, his only weapon the jawbone of an ass. Samson and his jawbone show us any man baptized with the Holy Spirit can speak like an ass and still triumph over the enemy.³² The sons of Saul would not stand against the enemy. They refused to speak out. As a result of this abject cowardice, they lost their heavenly anointing to lead.



The sons of Saul fell from their high places because their allegiance was never sworn to the Lamb. Under worldly pressure they showed their true colors. They revealed that their allegiance is to the state. And submitting to the state, they became government-ordained leaders of the state church in America. Being ordained by a pagan government because they fear man, the sons of Saul forfeited their heavenly anointing to lead God's people. And that anointing is not coming back.

³¹ Joshua 1:9

³² Judges 15:15

Covid Killed King Saul

When these sons of Saul locked their church doors they went beyond the point of no return. They took a step too far and with that step they brought God's judgment down upon themselves. Judgment, after all, begins with the house of the Lord.³³

God judged the sons of Saul by removing their anointing to lead.

They lost their anointing to lead because what a man does in the natural world foretells what he is doing (or about to do) in the spiritual realm. As the Bible explains, the natural precedes the spiritual.³⁴

Leaders who prevent God's people from coming into God's physical house are also keeping (or will soon keep) God's people from coming into God's spiritual house— because the natural precedes the spiritual.³⁵



God's judgment on the sons of Saul should come as no surprise. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke beforehand to God's leaders on the exact same matter. Christ said, *“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees.*

³³ 1 Peter 4:17

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:46

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:46

Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces. You won't go in yourselves, and you don't let others enter either” (Matthew 23:13).

What Christ Jesus said to religious leaders two thousand years ago, He says today. God does not change.³⁶

God commands His leaders, *“Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.”*³⁷



Whether the sons of Saul realize it or not (and most do not), each one of them who locked the church doors during the covid crisis lost their anointing to lead God's people. Sliding the bolt in the lock was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Locking the children out of the Father's house was one compromise too many.

³⁶ Numbers 23:19

³⁷ Matthew 19:14, cf. Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16

Today inside the Saul wing of God's house none of its so-called leaders are anointed by God to lead. Covid killed King Saul.

He Was Unfaithful

It is written, *“So Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord. He failed to obey the Lord's command, and he even consulted a medium.”*³⁸

Bible students remember that when King Saul died his house still existed but the anointing to lead God's people had forever flown from it. The anointing to lead God's people is not coming back to the household of Saul. God let covid kill King Saul because he was unfaithful.

Lacking anointed leadership, the Saul wing of God's house is doomed to ruin.³⁹ Soon it will only exist in the pages of history books. Who will mourn its passing?

While there is a long war ahead in the American church between the house of Saul and the house of David, the outcome is decided. Men with the heart of David will rule God's house in America.⁴⁰ With their leadership will come greater glory than the Saul wing ever knew.

*“The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former,” says the Lord of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ declares the Lord of hosts.”*⁴¹

David Wing

³⁸ 1 Chronicles 10:13 NLT

³⁹ 2 Samuel 3:12

⁴⁰ 1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22

⁴¹ Haggai 2:9 ESV

While the David wing of God’s house in America already exists, at this time it is often viewed as an outlier and its leaders ridiculed as misfits, unhinged zealots or rebellious.⁴²

But Davidic leaders are fearless conquerors. “They have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”⁴³

Men of David’s house are unafraid to die. They die daily to themselves for God.⁴⁴ Fearlessly they lay down their lives for God’s sheep.

Believers in the Saul wing will migrate to the David wing because Davidic leaders will lead them to God and not to themselves. What has been a trickle of people heading for the exit doors of the Saul wing will become an exodus.

According to one respected pollster, only six percent of American church leaders never changed their services during the covid crisis.⁴⁵ And for American church leaders who locked their doors and then re-opened later, on average thirty-three percent of pre-covid attendees never returned.⁴⁶

Davidic Leadership

For the time being, believers may need to search out of the way places to find Davidic leadership, places as unseemly as Gath or as remote as the Cave of Abdullam or as unlikely as the burned-out village of Ziklag.⁴⁷ While Davidic leaders now reside in hidden places, soon they will be as easy to find as gold in Solomon’s temple.⁴⁸ God will not leave His sheep without shepherds.

⁴² 1 Samuel 25:10-11

⁴³ Revelation 12:11 ESV

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:31

⁴⁵ Pew Research; www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/22/more-houses-of-worship-are-returning-to-normal-operations-but-in-person-attendance-is-unchanged-since-fall/?org=982&lvl=100&ite=9703&lea=2048393&ctr=0&par=1&trk=a0D3j0000112O9dEAE

⁴⁶ Ditto

⁴⁷ 1 Samuel 21:10-15, 22:1, 27:6, 30:1

⁴⁸ 1 Kings 6:21

When the long war between the house of David and the house of Saul ends, when this civil war in the American church draws to a close and God's house is unified under Davidic leadership, the American church will be unstoppable. It will be the most powerful and beautiful force this nation has ever seen.

When that time arrives, the church will sweep this nation up into the arms of Christ. As one Davidic leader continually prophesies, "America shall be saved."⁴⁹



⁴⁹ Dutch Sheets (<https://dutchsheets.org>)

Prodigal

Daughter of Saul

At the close of 2022 the Lord Jesus Christ taught me a lesson. It took several weeks for the lesson to sink in. I can be as stubborn as a mule, as hardheaded as any Jew that Jeremiah pleaded with.⁵⁰

The first part of the lesson came when I was hired to drive a bus load of church goers to a musical play called *David*.⁵¹ *David*, as the title indicates, is a telling of David's life.

During this multi-day trip, one female traveler on the bus introduced me to another, saying the second woman, like me, was a minister. The minister-woman pastored in a denomination that marries and ordains homosexuals. According to the Bible there are neither homosexual church leaders nor homosexual marriages or mature women of God who speak aloud in church services.⁵²



I thought little of meeting this daughter of Saul. In fact, so much unrighteous indignation arose within me that I could not hide my disdain for this woman.⁵³ If I could have thrown that daughter of Saul down from her pulpit,

⁵⁰ Exodus 33:3-5, Ezekiel 3:7

⁵¹ www.sight-sound.com

⁵² 1 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁵³ 1 Corinthians 14:13-40

I would have done it that moment. I was her enemy and she sensed it. But something happened to change my heart towards her, to see her in a new light.

The day after meeting this woman brought the end to the trip. It was night when I stopped to unload the passengers and the parking lot was dark. As I unloaded the last of the luggage from beneath the bus, the daughter of Saul approached me.

Holding out her hand she quietly said, “God told me to give this to you.”

In her hand was a folded bill.

The way the woman said what she said and did what she did struck me like a bolt from the blue. God grabbed me by the collar. As I tried to understand what God was telling me, thoughts raced through my mind.

First, I knew that giving money to another is the same as sharing your physical life with them, so I realized this daughter of Saul was sacrificing some bit of her life to strengthen me, her enemy.

Second, despite knowing my ill will toward her, she obeyed God and gave part of her livelihood to me, fulfilling the scripture, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink.”⁵⁴

Third, the woman used the exact same sentence I often say when giving financially to others. Echoes of, “God told me to give this to you,” rang like church bells in my head.

What in the world was God telling me?

“Thank you,” I said, taking care to remember the pocket into which I placed the folded bill.

I wanted to see in the light what this woman had given me in the dark. In the bus alone under the cabin light, I unfolded the note. The light revealed a fifty-dollar bill.

⁵⁴ Romans 12:20a

Jubilee

“Fifty,” I thought staring at the bill, “means Jubilee.”⁵⁵

Again my mind raced.

Under the Mosaic covenant, every fifty years in Israel is the year of Jubilee.⁵⁶ In the year of Jubilee, people and places return to God’s original intended order. Once every fifty years, everything God’s people messed up is straightened out. What God did for Israel through Moses in the natural realm, He does today through the Spirit. God will straighten out the church’s mess.

Looking at the bill by the cabin light, I realized this daughter of Saul gave me a sign that God is straightening out His house in America. A ‘Jubilee’ is coming to the American church. While few may see it now, Jubilee is already here. God is cleaning up His house, setting everything in order.

But there was more to this sign than just Jubilee. There was icing on the cake. The icing was the face on the fifty-dollar bill. As I looked at the bill, I saw more of what God was saying.

U.S. Grant

Pictured on the fifty-dollar bill is U.S. Grant. U.S. Grant is the general who victoriously fought the American civil war to save the union. After winning the war and preserving the union, U.S. Grant was elected President of the United States.

⁵⁵ Leviticus 25:10-54

⁵⁶ Leviticus 25:10-54



When the civil war in the American church comes to an end, God's presence will permeate His house and His church will live in union. What we have totally messed up, God will completely straighten out.

In time, the church's civil war will come to an end and the church's perfect union will result. There will not be two houses in America under one God. Only one house—the house of David, the man after God's own heart.⁵⁷

Second Jolt

Despite the revelations given by God through this daughter of Saul, my heart remained hard. I still wanted church leaders from the Saul wing tossed out of God's house on their bums. I did not want to forgive them for their compromises, for their selfishness, for presiding over the destruction of God's house in America. So God in His mercy sent me another sign.

⁵⁷ 1 Samuel 13:14



With a second jolt, God gave me another chance to desire mercy for leaders from the Saul wing who repent.

Broken Preacher

Two weeks after meeting the preacher-woman on the bus, a mainline denominational pastor reached out to me. The man's life choices had come around to crush his heart. He needed love and without saying it, hoped I would love him. In our younger days this preacher and I had been friends. Decades ago, the man's love for me kept me alive. He saved me from suicide.

But over the years this man and his denomination wandered from the narrow path. So I parted ways with him in the same manner King Saul parted ways with truth: gradually and then suddenly.

I had not communicated with this man in years. I had no love for a so-called shepherd of God's sheep who for thirty years refused to risk his life to protect God's sheep. I had no time for a so-called 'man of God' who refused to be God's man.

But now this fellow was back in my life, broken in spirit, seeking God's love, needing a friend. It took two days of repentance on my part and more than one brother's fervent prayers to get my heart into a condition where I could respond to this man in love.

The Heart

In crossing paths with these two leaders from the household of Saul, God's lesson to me became as clear as day. Upon reflection here is what I learned.

Many church leaders now belonging to the household of Saul will repent. They will repent with tears for fearing man, for wrecking God's house and polluting their own souls.

When they repent, they will come knocking on the door of David's house, looking for a spiritual home. Upon their arrival, they are to be welcomed in the same manner the prodigal son was received home by his father— whole heartedly.⁵⁸

True, these former leaders squandered years of golden opportunities to deepen their relationships with the Father. Instead of building the Father's house, they took from it and wasted it. Instead of advancing the King's kingdom, they surrendered it to the enemy. Instead of maturing the saints, they kept God's people in a childish state.

But if they repent, they will be forgiven. They will be redeemed. Because the Father always welcomes His penitent sons and daughters back into His family, we too must welcome these brothers and sisters back into God's house, forgiving them as fully as the Father does, if they repent.

Until God taught me this lesson, my heart was the heart of the prodigal's older brother. I wanted these people disciplined for making a wreck of God's house. What about you?

⁵⁸ Luke 15:11-32 `



City in Ruin

The American church appeared in the vision as the bombed-out hulk of a once cosmopolitan city.

What I saw reminded me of Germany's capitol, Berlin, at the end of World War II. So horrific was the sight that I wondered if what I saw resembled Jerusalem stripped of its glory in 70 A.D.⁵⁹

Through December 2022 and into January 2023 the same dismal picture appeared repeatedly. Each time I saw the destroyed city I knew I was glimpsing the American church.



I suspected there might be more to this reoccurring vision than just a destroyed city. Otherwise why would I be shown it again and again? So in my mind's eye, by the Spirit, I walked into the scene. I walked into Berlin in 1945. I stepped into the ruins of the American church.

After glancing at the wreckage around me, I noticed my clothes. I was wearing a dark cloak made from one piece of material. A black rope tied

⁵⁹ In 70 AD the Romans under Titus destroyed Jerusalem, burned the Temple, and slaughtered over one-million Jews within the city walls.

around my waist like a belt. The hood of the cloak covered my head and partially hid my face. The cloak continued down to my ankles.

“I’m disguised as a Benedictine monk,” I laughed.



I tilted my head down to see if the hood would hide my face. When I did, I saw a bit under the cloak at my neck. Glimpsing under the cloak, I noticed something odd. The cloak contained light shining from my body. To outward appearances I must have looked like a shadow among the ruins, the way the cloak camouflaged me. But without the cloak I would have stood out like a neon sign in a moonless night.

I looked up and saw light flashes in low-hanging clouds. A number of seconds passed before muted thundering reached my ears. Then the distant light show and rumbling repeated. If what I saw and heard was artillery then the main battle was some distance away. I was glad to be out of the crossfire.

The Church

Checking for danger, I walked off the street, climbed up and over a pile of rubble and into the remains of a once multi-story building. Wall sections that remained standing were windowless, teetering on collapse. Twisted pipes stuck out of rubble heaps like broken arms and disjointed legs. In the gloom I saw the scalloped piece of a church bell half buried in rubble. Looking up where the roof should have been, were the remains of a spire. Seeing the spire, I realized I stood in the ruins of a once majestic church.



Looking back down at my surroundings, I saw them. They sat hunched on a few broken pews right beside me. They were looking at the floor. I counted six. Six dust covered people sat in the bombed-out church. I touched the closest one.

The Grandmother

With my right hand I gently tapped the person's left shoulder and whispered, "Hi there. Are you okay?"

An older woman slowly turned her head left and looked up at me. Lines darkened her face. Gazing at my face, she scoured her memory, embarrassed at being unable to bring my name to mind. We had never met before.

But the problem was not that she had no recollection of me. The problem was she could not focus her eyes. She looked too far and then too closely, never focusing. Worse, her brown eyes did not work in sync. The woman was not blind, but she could not see.

Not wanting to frighten her I asked her what she was doing.

She snapped, “Be quiet. You will interrupt the service. The preacher is about to begin.”

“What preacher? Where is he?”

Not moving her un-focusing eyes from my direction, she jabbed her right arm towards the wreckage that had once been the altar or pulpit. No one was there.

“Oh yes,” I nodded, looking in the direction she pointed and then back down at her.

I wanted to calm the woman.

“Are you a Christian?” I asked.

She sat a little straighter in her chair and relaxed enough to draw her arm back to her side. A necklace with a small silver cross hung over her wool sweater. The sweater had once been sky blue. Now it was dirty and faded.

“Yes, I am,” came her almost warm reply.

One of her ankles was chained to the floor. Looking a second time I saw the chain was actually a snake. The snake lay coiled between her feet. Fear of the snake kept the woman bolted to her seat. The woman would have been embarrassed had she known I knew the reason she refused to move, so I kept what I saw to myself.

“What is the most spiritual thing you have ever experienced in your Christian life?” I asked, “What’s your best God story?”

Maybe refreshing her memories of her past victories would empower the grandmother to escape this destruction.

As the grandmother thought about my question she smiled, careful not to move her feet or shift her legs.

“It would take a long time to tell that story.”

“I have time. I will stand here and listen. I would love to hear your story,” I said, bending to gently touch her shoulder again.

“Okay.”

The word “okay” popped out of her mouth like a cork from a bottle. Her shoulders relaxed and she sat a little straighter.

“Have you ever heard of a book called *Total Forgiveness*? R.T. Kendall wrote it.”

“Yes, I read that book,” I replied smiling, “It’s a good one. R.T. once told me his initials stand for ‘Right Theology.’”

The grandmother missed R.T.’s joke. She stammered.

“So tell me,” I asked, “what happened with you and R.T.’s book?”

The grandmother drew in a breath. Her un-focusing eyes gave a sparkle.

She said, “I read the book, ‘Total Forgiveness.’ It meant a lot to me so I asked my preacher if he would teach it. He said, ‘No but you can teach it.’ I did not feel qualified to teach it but he insisted. After some days thinking, I said I would.”

“The preacher,” the grandmother said, “was one of the people who took the course. No one in church knew the preacher and his wife were unhappy in their marriage. A few days after the teaching was over the preacher came and told me he and his wife reconciled after totally forgiving each other. He said my lessons on forgiveness saved their marriage. I had no idea,” she smiled.

Light glimmered in the grandmother’s face.

“Wow,” I exclaimed, “that’s amazing.”

“But that’s not all.”

Straightening her shoulders a bit more she said, “Then I left for the summer to visit my cousin in California. For some reason I brought along the leftover copies of *Total Forgiveness* that our church didn’t use. When I arrived in California I told my cousin the story about teaching the course and my pastor’s marriage being saved, and she told her pastor what I said. I had no idea she told him.”

Light from the grandmother’s face shone faintly into the darkness.

“Then her pastor asked me to teach the course in his church that summer. I told him I didn’t have enough books and by the time books arrived it would be too late to start because we would not finish before summer ended and I returned home. He insisted I start teaching the course even if it could not be finished, so after thinking about it I agreed.

“That’s bold,” I smiled.

“He announced the course in church that Sunday. Ten people signed up for the course and you know,” she said, her eyes twinkling, “that’s how many books I brought in the car with me.”

“Wow! That is a great story. God sent you on that mission to California and you went and you did it. I am proud of you. You are a woman of faith. Our God is amazing. You are amazing. May I tell you one of my God stories?”

“Yes,” she said still trying to focus on my face.

She needed strength to deal with that snake. She needed to get moving. Time for her was short.

I said, “I broke my leg in a construction accident and when I asked Jesus why I was laid up in bed for ten weeks, He said, ‘So you will write that book.’ I knew which book Jesus meant.”

I said, “Jesus wanted me to write a book on the six elementary principles of Christianity. Have you ever heard of the six elementary principles?” I asked the grandmother. “They’re listed in Hebrews chapter six verses one and two, as plain as day.”

The grandmother's eyes dimmed. A wave of bewilderment crossed her face.

"No, I never have heard of them," she said.

"That's okay. Not many Christians have. The six foundational principles are listed in the Bible in Hebrews six, verses one and two. Only about half the church has some idea of them all. It's not a big deal not to have known them but it is important to learn them."

I wanted to make sure she knew I wasn't inventing theology. I wanted her to become strong enough to stand up and walk out of this place. No one could live in this war zone much longer. She had already outlived the odds. God must have been preserving her.

"The first principle," I told her, "is 'repentance from dead works.' Do you know what 'dead works' are?"

"No, I don't believe I do," the grandmother replied, tilting her bruised chin sideways, her body tightening.

"That's alright. Listen, in my pocket I have a copy of the book Jesus told me to write about the six principles. I'd love to give it to you. I believe you will enjoy it. The book has received good reviews from trusted theologians. It will help you a lot. And you can learn about dead works."

"What church do you belong to?"

Her unseeing eyes narrowed. Big guns rumbled in the distance. I smiled. She was trying to determine if I was trustworthy.

I said, "We have a home meeting every Friday night. Once every week we have a communion supper and read scripture and sing songs of praise to Jesus."

"How many people come to your meeting?"

If others trusted me, maybe she could trust me too.

"Usually another couple joins us. Sometimes two. We love Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Him," I

said, hoping she would grab the lifeline and get out of this destruction. She would not come with me then but maybe she would gather enough strength later to escape. Maybe someone else would arrive to help her or maybe the Spirit would come or send a dream.

“Would you like a copy of the book? It will really help you.”

The grandmother did not respond.

“I will sign it for you.”

“I’ll have to pass,” she said flatly.

The last of the light faded from her face. She quit trying to focus.

“It will really help you,” I pleaded, “Please read it.”

“I do not know where you are coming from.”

Whatever I said next would be the last words the grandmother would hear from me.

“Have you ever heard of the religious spirit?”

“No.”

“The religious spirit is evil. It tries to take the place of the Holy Spirit.”

I said, “The religious spirit chains people to the church or to doctrine or to good works instead of bringing them closer to God. It uses control and fear to keep Christians from hearing and following the Holy Spirit. That evil spirit is happy keeping Christians busy doing good deeds that God never sent them to do. The religious spirit wants Christians to be intellectual Christians, not Christians who hear the Spirit speak and obey His commands, not Christians who pick up their cross and follow Jesus. That devil is pleased when the Christians join Bible studies that never change the way you live. You learned that through R.T.’s book.”

“As a Christian you’re supposed to have the Holy Spirit inside of you,” I told the grandmother. “You have been a believer many years, long enough to be able to ask the Holy Spirit right now if I am a wolf in sheep’s clothing or if

I am one of God's sheep. You should be able to discern if I have been sent to you by God or if I am from the devil.

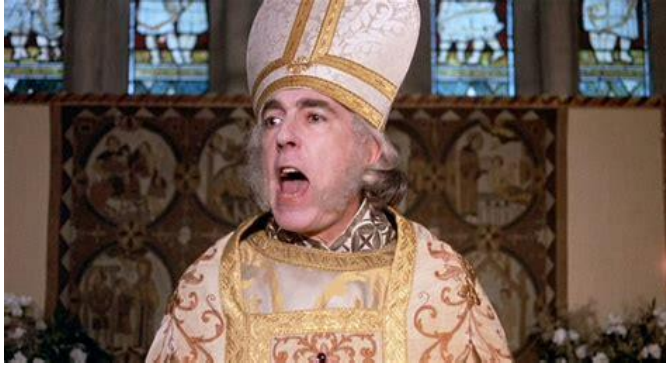
“As a long-time believer you should know the Holy Spirit's voice well enough to let Him guide you. You should be able to ask Him questions and hear His answers. God promises, ‘The Holy Spirit will teach you all things.’ ‘All things’ includes knowing if I am trustworthy and whether or not you should read the book.”

The grandmother looked deeply confused, like she had heard this teaching before but never lived it, like Pentecost was accepted theology but not accepted practice. Shadows recovered the woman's face as she turned her head away from me and back towards the snake between her feet. As she turned, she blended in again with the surrounding destruction, looking no different than the other church goers who sat like unmoving lumps nearby. Then he appeared.

The Preacher

A gaunt man with yellowish hair and a hawkish face appeared where the grandmother had pointed, where the altar and pulpit used to be. The man looked like he lived in the church's graveyard.

His gown was a musty shade. Around his neck hung a brown string with a broken wooden cross that was too large. Instead of being a \dagger shape, the over-sized cross looked like \lrcorner . Unbalanced, the cross swung off-center from the man's neck.



The man noticed me a few moments after I saw him. He started sizing me up right away. While he stared at me, he clicked his teeth like he wanted something to say but hadn't thought of the words yet. The man's teeth were chipped and discolored. Feeling pressured by the silence between us, he spoke before his thoughts got organized.

When he spoke his arms made sweeping gestures that did not go with his words. Clicking his teeth on every hard syllable and spitting out his Ss, the preacher slowly said, "Thou sir art a man come in from the cold to the warmth of God's good hearth. Welcome brother to God's house of grace and miracles."

Behind the preacher's bony face was a second face. His second face looked like the hollowed-out face of an owl.

"Sit down beside that good woman near unto thee," he ordered, showing his tombstone teeth and pointing a crooked finger at me or her, I could not tell which, "and," he said clicking and spitting, "join our loving congregation as we come to the father of us all who offers grace abundant to us sinners."

Verbally pushing me to obey his command, he added with honey-smearred contempt, "What a beautiful morning to be in God's house. Amen?"

The people on the pews mumbled, "Amen."

Never pausing to catch his reply, I said, "Thank you but I must be going," first edging away then scrambling over the rubble and back into the war-torn street.

A few moments after I made it to the seeming safety of the street, broken strains of Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” twisted out through the missing windows and broken walls of the church. The strange sound added another layer of creepiness to the atmosphere, and I finally realized how carefully I would have to walk to emerge unharmed from this place.

Soldiers

As I picked my way further away from the church, heading down the righthand side of the street, a soldier darted through shadows to my left. Then I saw another one. The second soldier I saw clearer than the first.

The second soldier carried an automatic weapon and wore a Red Army helmet and uniform dating from World War II. The soldiers either did not see me or did not care about me. I did not know which explanation was true and did not want to find out.



A block later I saw a third soldier. He was crouched behind a broken chunk of concrete, aiming his sniper rifle up the same street I was traveling, so I

stopped going that way. Not wanting to go back towards the creepy church and not wanting to go further up the street and into a line of the sniper's fire, I stood still and looked around. Wondering which way to go next, I saw a light.

Joel

The light appeared momentarily on the ground floor of a bombed building to my right. Inside the light, I glimpsed the outline of a man bending down. He was not a soldier. I edged over for a better look. As I did, the light reappeared and disappeared in the same place. As my eyes refocused, a man stood where none had been before. The man looked in my direction.

“Friend or foe,” I wondered.

I ducked behind a concrete pillar then peeped around the edge of it. In the time it took me to crouch, move and look back, the man had closed to within a few feet of me. The man looked down at me, smiling. I wondered how a man so big moved so fast.

The barrel-chested man wore a monk's robe like mine but with a different colored rope. The rope around his waist was bright green. I smiled back. What else could I do? As I studied the big man, he surveyed our surroundings, then he looked back at me. His blue eyes gleamed like an eagle's.

“What are you doing out here? This is not a safe place,” he said.

His quiet voice resonated with strength.

“Curiosity. Out for a walk. Who are you?”

“My name is Joel. Pleased to meet you,” he said sticking out his big hand dotted blue with old prison tattoos. Joel had a history.

Joel's eyes seemed as deep as wells. His face and voice contained the warmth of a fireside in winter. From the start, Joel was easy to like.

Still crouching, I reached up and shook Joel's big hand. My hand disappeared in his.

"Friend," Joel warned, "curiosity killed the cat. You best come with me."

Joel did not say another word. He turned gracefully to leave. He need not ask me twice. I followed Joel away from the street and deeper into the bombed-out building. We headed in the direction where the light had blazed.

Behind a broken piano, Joel bent down and grabbed the handle to a cellar door. If Joel had not guided me, I would have overlooked the cellar door even if I had stepped on it. It was difficult to see in the dimness and rubble. As the door opened, light poured out through the opening in the floor. My eyes adjusted. I followed Joel downstairs.

Bunker

"A bunker," I thought as I descended, "a safe place."

When my feet reached the floor, I took a deep breath. The air was clean and made me feel better. I took another breath, exhaled and pulled back the hood of my cloak. I felt safe. There was no darkness in the place. It was filled with light. Near me stood four people, Joel included. The three men and one woman were the most noble and, at the same time, the most common people I have ever seen.

Joel's friends smiled as he introduced us. The two men stepped forward one at a time and shook my hand. I sensed each wanting to hug me during the handshake. It seemed natural to let them. When they hugged me, love or power entered me. What came into me from these new, warmhearted friends healed some old hurts. New strength entered my heart and it felt good.

As I stood in the light among these few people, I realized that while Joel had brought me into a military bunker, it was truer he had led me into an underground church.

Looking at these noble people and their light-filled surroundings, this verse came to mind: “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Joel and those with him had learned to love.⁶⁰

“Joel, how many people belong to this underground church?”

“We are three men, four women and five children. We invited plenty more to join us, but this is all who would come in. Most people acted like we were crazy when we explained the war and our bunker safe beneath it. I guess they were like the proverbial frogs in the pot that never realize they are getting cooked until it’s too late. Maybe the ones who mocked us got ‘cooked.’ I hope not but we don’t know.”

“Joel, many of them did cook like frogs and they’re gone forever, now. The war took them and from what I saw up there, it’s about to take the few who remain.”

The words I spoke came out wrapped in pain, and I realized for the first time how brokenhearted I was over the devastation above. My heart was broken in the same way the Israelites’ hearts were broken over the destruction of their beloved Jerusalem.⁶¹

My heart hurt like Jesus’ heart hurt when He said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.”⁶²

As I thought about Jesus’ heart for the church, Joel said, “Jesus can resurrect frogs. He can rebuild the church.”

A smile covered Joel’s broad face.

“But they’d still be frogs,” I quipped.

⁶⁰ Colossians 3:12-14 ESV

⁶¹ Psalm 137

⁶² Matthew 22:37 NIV

My hopelessness over what I had seen above and felt in my heart was hard to hide.

“Jesus changes people’s nature. He builds new, better things out of old dead things.”

Joel’s deep sparkling eyes and warm smile convicted me.

“Yes, you are very right,” I answered, “God’s business is people, and His specialty is making good out of bad. I am wrong to lose hope for those above in the city.”

“You’ve been alone in battle a long time,” Joel said, “Jesus led you here to rest. As you rest your mind will clear. You will heal and gain new strength.”

“Jesus will keep changing you into what He means for you to be,” Joel said, “We will pray for your heart to change at the right time in the right way, and for healing to come. You’ll get better.”

Joel put his right hand on my left shoulder.

Looking into my eyes, Joel said, “Brother, we are all on a journey. And there is a great battle ahead of us for which we are not yet prepared to win. But we are being prepared. We are warriors becoming invincible.”

Removing his hand from my shoulder and pointing at the walls around us, Joel said, “The church will be resurrected from these depths. She will arise from here completely changed. One day soon every member of the church will look like Jesus, but in his or her own personality, and then we will be unstoppable. Then there will be a war to end all wars.”

Joel said this in a way that made me feel totally accepted despite my shortcomings. The way Joel corrected me and then related our purpose and future, I felt loved. The love I felt here made me want to quickly become the man God wanted me to become. The love I felt made me want to help Joel and the others here any way I could.

“Before this war got serious,” Joel continued, “I heard a preacher from Zambia say the enemy was at the city gates and would not turn back, but I

don't think three in five thousand believed him. I was part of a megachurch at the time," Joel said. "That African came right into our church and said exactly what God told him to say. Of course, they never let him back in again. But that's okay. He said what needed to be said. Most did not believe him and nearly all the rest did not understand him."

Joel's eyes filled with water. He was remembering lost friends.

"Until it was too late, nobody believed Jeremiah either," I said trying to comfort him.

Joel nodded, giving an expression that said he felt my attempt at love. While my heart was not yet as healed as Joel's was, we were kindred spirits. Love for one another was rapidly growing in us both, or least love was growing in my heart. Maybe Joel already loved me, and my heart was just catching up to his.

Before a tear fully formed in Joel's eye for old friends who refused to believe the prophets, his expression rebounded from sorrow to joy.

"You should meet the children here," Joel said smiling, "They are amazing. Of the twelve of us, we have a family of five and one couple. The rest of us wandered in here like you, more or less alone. I say 'more or less' because the Spirit tells us when to go up and look for wanderers. He leads us right to them but like I said, few invited to come in from the cold, do come."

"That's the hundred-fold promise," I said.

"What?"

"Jesus says something like, 'Anyone who gives up mother or father or brothers or sisters to follow Me will receive a hundred-fold in return.'⁶³ Somehow Jesus makes up for lost relationships," I said.

"I wonder why Jesus doesn't include wives or husbands in His list of lost family members?" Joel asked reflectively. "My wife said I went overboard with religion, and she wouldn't listen to anyone worth listening to. Maybe I

⁶³ Matthew 19:29

did not tell her what she needed to hear in a way she could understand. Maybe I didn't love her as Christ loves the church."⁶⁴

Joel asked the first question of me. The part about his wife he said to none in the room.

"Anyway," Joel said refocusing, "I have not heard from my wife in two years. It's been two years since the bombs started falling like boom-boom clockwork. If my daughter is alive, she's sixteen."

Joel had entrusted his family to the Lord Jesus Christ. I could hear it in his voice and see it in his face. Joel was a likable man. Who would not want to live in this bunker with him? Who would not want to be his friend?

"Joel, are other bunkers out there? Are more people living beneath this city like you and our friends here?"

"There are thousands more but we're not sure where they are. That's what God told Elijah when he felt alone— 'There are seven thousand more.'⁶⁵ When we go up to look for wanderers, we go because the Spirit says go. He never leads us far from our bunker. We're home bodies, you might say. Anyway, our sense is that when the time is right, we will connect with other people from other bunkers. When we start connecting, our power will multiply. Then we will fight."

With these last words, Joel's energy increased.

Pointing his right index finger in the air, he added, "One puts a thousand to flight and two, ten thousand."⁶⁶

Joel's eyes sparked with violence.

Pointing at my stomach he repeated himself even louder, "One puts a thousand to flight and two, ten thousand."

⁶⁴ Ephesians 5:25

⁶⁵ Romans 11:4

⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 32:30

I would have feared Joel's forceful attitude had his behavior not caused my soul to leap up along with his in boldness. As Joel pointed at my stomach something spiritually fierce came into me. Thoughts flashed through my mind.

The phrase, "One puts a thousand to flight; two, ten thousand," would soon be a battle cry heard in the city above," I thought, "Afterwards it will be heard in the war for the world."

In my mind's eye, I saw Joel as a sergeant in that army, the fiercest army ever to march upon the earth.

After Joel's blessing of courage came into me, the fire in his eyes subsided. His voice returned to normal.

Joel said, "Before we moved underground, I heard an old prophet explain that soldiering for God works like that. The prophet's name was Bob Jones. Most people thought he was a crackpot. Anyway, Bob said because one of God's men chases a thousand enemy soldiers and two chase ten thousand, then three men chase one-hundred thousand, and four men of God, Bob told me, can destroy an army of a million devils."

"Four," Joel grinned, "that's not many."

"And now that you're here," Joel's smile widened across his big nodding head, "we have four men."

Joel's great smile passed away as quickly as it came. His face spoke for him. His thoughts were roaming for the right next thing to say, the worthy thing. His eyes searched the distance. The silence that came while he searched for what to say seemed natural and comfortable.

Finding what needed to be said, Joel said, "Bob Jones explained it would only take twenty-seven men in unity to chase all the demons on earth back into hell."

"Twenty-seven," Joel said, his head nodding, "that is not many."

As I watched Joel, I sensed he could see these prophecies coming to pass. Joel could spiritually see four men bound together in love, routing a million demons. He could see twenty-seven men in the unity of love overcoming the powers of the world. Joel's heart knew what it felt like to do what had never been done before. Joel was alive in the future he saw because Joel believed the prophets.⁶⁷

Explaining that future, Joel continued, "One day— no, one hour soon we will hear a trumpet sound. Then we will climb those stairs into battle. When the Spirit says 'go up' to us as He did to King David, then all the others in all the other bunkers will hear the same command at the same time and they will go up too. We will arise together as one."

"Before that command sounds and the battle begins, we expect to connect with some of our brothers and leaders in other bunkers," Joel said, "My wife and daughter might be in one of those bunkers. There are at least seven thousand more living underground like us and possibly," Joel said, his eyes twinkling, "there are enough of us to make multiples of twenty-seven."

"But," Joel added with confidence, "there are at least twenty-seven. In this bunker we have twelve, and you make thirteen."

"And then," Joel said, "fourteen is all the more needed."

Maybe you will be one of them.

⁶⁷ Matthew 10:41, Luke 24:25