

## THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED

Everyone knows that all is not right with the world. Not everyone knows why, or how to make it right. The world is not right because of sin, and the way to make it right is through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When the first man, Adam, rebelled against God, he brought sin and death to mankind, just as God had warned him. After Adam sinned, the principle of death set in, and ever since every man comes into the world, as Saint Paul writes, “dead in trespasses and sins.” (Ephesians 2:1) Cut off from the life that is in God, they are corrupted by sin, body and soul. They are full of sin and disease, and disease is a symptom, and a picture, of the corruption of sin.

In the days of the divided monarchy, the souther kingdom of Judah was wicked, and God called Isaiah to prophesy against it. Isaiah said, “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.” (Isaiah 1:4) Isaiah preached to the people that they were corrupted by sin, and he spoke with the metaphor of disease of the body. He said, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” (Isaiah 1:5, 6) The people of Judah had, of course, physical disease. However, the more concerning ailment was sin. They did not have to remain diseased, however. If they repented, then the Lord would heal their disease of sin. He asked them, “Why should ye be stricken any more?”

Through Isaiah, the Lord promised to come to judge people. He would condemn the unrighteous, and save the righteous. He would put matters right. The Lord, carrying on the metaphor of disease, ordered Isaiah to prophesy that He would heal them; He would heal them of their disease of sin and all of its debilitating and disgusting symptoms. He said:

Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. (Isaiah 35:3-7)

The people did not repent, so the Lord sent the army of Babylonia to conquer the kingdom of Judah, and carry the people away into exile. The Babylonians destroyed the capital city of Jerusalem, and the temple there. Some years later, the Persians conquered the Babylonians, and Cyrus, king of Persia, ordered the Jews to return to their homeland to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and so they did. The Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, took the land of Israel away from the Babylonians, and the Romans from the Greeks.

Although the Jews had, since the end of the Babylonian Captivity, lived in their ancestral land, they were subjects of various Gentile rulers, and they longed for liberation. John the Baptist testified that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the one God promised would inherit the throne of David and rule in righteousness. Some believed John’s testimony, and they regarded Jesus as their liberator. He was their liberator, but not in the way they thought.

When John the Baptist preached to King Herod that he sinned by taking his brother's wife, Herod put John in prison. This caused John some doubt about Jesus. He had seen the Spirit descend upon Him. He knew of Jesus's miracles. Yet, Jesus did not liberate the people. Moreover, Herod was a wicked ruler who wrongfully imprisoned John. So, John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" (Luke 7:19) Saint Luke records that "in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." (Luke 7:21) Then Jesus said to John's disciples:

Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. (Luke 7:22, 23)

Jesus did heal people's disease; He did restore them to health, and He did so because He is compassionate. Yet, healing people's physical ailments was symbolic of healing them of the malignancy of sin. The Jews wished to be liberated from their Gentile oppressors, but God allowed their oppression because of their sins. If the Jews would have political liberation, then they must first have spiritual liberation. If they would have a healthy society, then they must first be healthy people; they must first be made whole from the fatal effects of sin. They must first be forgiven their sins, and freed from sin's bondage. Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, came first and foremost to atone for the sin's of His people, and to deliver them from slavery to sin.

Let us repent of our sins. Let us believe in Jesus Christ. Let us first, by the grace of God, change ourselves, so that we might change the world for His glory.

Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.