



The Parable of the Census & the Pestilence

The Parable of the Census & the Pestilence
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W.D. Furioso

Edited by Frances Furioso

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Introduction

I have chosen the word “parable” for the title of this message. Alternatively, the word “allegory” could have been used. But, to be clear, the “story” to be told is not fiction, but is rather an historical event which took place in the Old Testament times. And the point of relating the story is two-fold: “Because whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”¹ And, “These things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”²

As David wrote: My heart overflows My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” I simply desired and asked the Lord for spiritual insight and understanding of “the present situation” and my mind has become flooded with insights from scripture. So, I have been motivated to write this message more quickly than I usually write - probably because our situation is evolving so quickly. I am certain that more details and further insights will follow later.

¹ Romans 15:4

² 1 Corinthians 10:11

Also, before speaking about the spiritual aspects of “the present situation”, I would like to point out that, according to the Hebrew Calendar, this is taking place at the time of the Spring Feasts (March through May). These feasts consist of Passover³, in which originally, the people of God had to remain in their houses, as “the angel of death” passed over those covered with the blood of the Lamb, as well as the feasts of Unleavened Bread⁴ (in the scriptures, leaven symbolizes sin and evil), the feast of First Fruits⁵, which commemorates a time of HARVEST culminating in the feast of Pentecost⁶. When we get to discussing God’s Agenda, I hope you will agree with me that God is, indeed, now at work to bring forth the first fruits of a time of harvest in His kingdom.

³ Or “Pesach”. The 14th and 15th days of the month of Nisan.

⁴ The 15th – 22nd days of Nisan.

⁵ The modern “Resurrection Sunday (Easter). The 16th and 17th days of Nisan.

⁶ Or “Feast of Weeks” – Shavuot. In the Book of Acts, the birth of the Church. The 6th and 7th days of the month of Sivan.

The Pandemic

“The present situation” I am referring to, of course, has to do with the current Pandemic, but, I believe it has to do with much more than that. The “much more” is not biological or financial, but spiritual. In fact, amidst all of the information regarding the biological and financial aspects of this situation, I was motivated to seek the Lord regarding what is going on in the spiritual dimension.⁷ So, please understand up front that I have nothing unique to offer regarding the science, or the governmental and social responses, or the financial consequences regarding this situation. It is what it is. Probably most of the science will prove to be accurate. Currently, the various governmental and social responses are probably our only options. And as disturbing as the health and financial outcomes are, we don’t know now the extent of future outcomes. Also, please understand, except for the fearful, faithless panic responses, generally speaking, I don’t think

⁷ I think John Piper has given an excellent and scriptural comment, “How Do We Make Sense of the Corona Virus?”. An excerpt: “*All natural disasters — whether floods, famines, locusts, tsunamis, or diseases — are a thunderclap of divine mercy in the midst of judgment, calling all people everywhere to repent and realign their lives, by grace, with the infinite worth of the glory of God. Luke 13:1-5. Now, that’s the message of Jesus to the world at this moment in history, under the coronavirus — a message to every single human being ... Repent and seek God’s mercy to bring your lives — our lives — into alignment with his infinite worth.*”

If you would like a .PDF copy of Piper’s entire text, email me: AtChristsTable@gmail.com

I disagree with any of the governmental and social responses. If we have other options, I certainly don't have any better suggestions. It is what it is. At this time, it seems to me, we don't have many other options. I say, "at this time", because in the future we may have other options, so to speak . As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to "hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches". And this is exactly what has motivated me to seek the Lord to understand what is taking place in the spiritual dimensions. I used the plural of "dimension" to indicate that BOTH God and Satan are currently at work, moving forward in BOTH of their agendas. It seems right to me to speak firstly about Satan's agenda, so as to get that out of the way, and end with the more important matters of God's agenda.

“Spiritual Insight & Understanding”

The apostle Paul wrote: “We are asking God that you may see things, as it were, from his point of view by being given spiritual insight and understanding.”⁸

I would like to express a concern. But before I do, I’ll preface it with the following: While I am of the opinion that the news media has the ability to, and actually is, creating an alternative reality in our hearts and minds with its 24/7 news programming, complete with powerful images,⁹ still, I am personally grateful for all of the communications technology we have to keep ourselves informed, giving us opportunity to make sound personal decisions. And, while I do think political parties are prone to, and actually do, utilize public crises to promote party agendas,¹⁰ I choose to believe that there are not a few politicians who are sincerely wanting to do their jobs with integrity. I am grateful for the scientists, health organizations, physicians, and dedicated health-care workers, whom I believe are doing their best for the public

⁸ Colossians 1:9, J.B. Phillips Translation

⁹ The news media is, by far, the most powerful and influential propaganda tool in the American culture.

¹⁰ Cf. “*The Shock Doctrine*”, by Naomi Klein. I personally think this is a one-sided presentation. While I think it is “true”, the same criticism it has for the Right can also be attributed to the Left.

welfare.¹¹ I also listen with an open mind to learn from economists' when they make their projections regarding our economic future.

I recognize and respect the expertise of all these people. But, their expertise is solely in the material realm – not in the spiritual realm. And, it concerns me that today there are too many Christians who follow the counsel of the world without ever comparing it to the counsel of God. I am not anti-intellectual, nor anti-science, but I don't consider it wisdom to accept and follow the opinions of the "experts" in the various fields of human endeavor without measuring what they say with what the word and the Spirit of God may have to say about the matter. With some exceptions, most of these "experts", along with most of the political leaders in the world, are without the Holy Spirit – that is, they are not born of the Spirit, and do not belong to Christ.¹² The scripture says that these "walk in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding",¹³ "without God in the world, and

¹¹ I have what I think is a unique and special blessing – a long-time personal friend who is a Christian and a physician in South Africa, with whom I communicate; and he gives me biblically-based, sound, objective, nutrition-oriented, and "free" medical advice! – Stephan Vosloo, who is a medical consultant to many factories and mines, as well as, 4,000 workers in South Africa.

¹² Romans 8:9. Cf. vv. 5-8.

¹³ Ephesians 4:17b-18a.

without hope”.¹⁴ Contrary to their arrogant ignorance, the harsh reality is that they do not have a hope of solving the problems of the world. Their ignorance is in the realm of the spiritual. Most don’t even believe there is a spiritual realm. Consequently, they know absolutely nothing of what lies behind the physical, financial, and socio-economic problems they are dealing with in the world – namely “world forces of darkness, spiritual forces of wickedness” – “rulers” and “powers”¹⁵ much more intelligent and powerful than they. Yet, Christians will follow their lead without even consulting the word and Spirit of God.

The whole of the 44 years I’ve been walking with the Lord, I have been of the opinion that too many Christians really do not take the spiritual realm as seriously as they should. I’ve concluded that this is because, in our age, we have a predominantly Man-Centered, humanistic Christianity, rather than a God-Centered spiritual Christianity. In any case, Jesus said, we MUST be born of the Spirit to see and enter the kingdom of God¹⁶; and that if we are to worship God it MUST be in spirit and truth, because God IS

¹⁴ Ephesians 2:12

¹⁵ Ephesians 6:12

¹⁶ John 3:3-8

Spirit.¹⁷ I find that Christians who are, let's say, "hesitant" with the Holy Spirit also do not really believe that Satan is of much spiritual significance. Their Christianity is far too limited to the material realm. Consequently, I believe this makes them the prey of Satan, the world forces of this darkness, the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*¹⁸, as well as, Satan's earthly cohorts in the world system¹⁹. Scripture identifies Satan as "the god of this world"²⁰; and that "the whole world is in his hand";²¹ and that Satan has "schemes".²² Regarding these "schemes", Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson, explains that this phrase is saying that Satan uses his intellect to devise evil plans and purposes. What are those plans and purposes? What is Satan's agenda? I am not advocating that we dedicate ourselves to the study of "the

¹⁷ John 4:24

¹⁸ Ephesians 6:12

¹⁹ The following quote communicates what we must understand about the world in which we live: "(It is) An ordered world system governed from behind the scenes by Satan. This system encompasses politics, education, literature, science, art, law, commerce, music -- anything involved in the progress of mankind.... No matter how good the initial intentions, all organizations created by mankind eventually turn away from Godly power to worldliness. When the influence of Divine Life is removed, organizations gravitate towards materialism, humanism, worldliness, and Satan." This quote is from a book summary (not an excerpt) of "*Love Not the World*" by Watchman Nee offered by a Davin Dahlgren on www.Indwelt.com.

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 4:4

²¹ 1 John 5:19. "in the hand of the evil one", (Alford). "lying helpless and motionless in the power of the evil one." (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown) "This is a terrible picture of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century A.D., which is confirmed by Paul in Romans 1 and 2 and by Horace, Seneca, Juvenal, Tacitus." (Robertson).

²² 2 Corinthians 2:11. "Schemes": Greek: noema, Strong's # 3540 – devices, plans, purposes. Using his mind for evil devises, plans and purposes. (Robertson)

deep things of Satan”²³. But rather, to “not be ignorant of his schemes”.²⁴

Satan’s Agenda

One way to simply summarize Satan’s agenda as the “god of this world” is that, in spite of Christ’s finished work of redemption and the fact that “the ruler of this world has been judged”²⁵, Satan is constantly working to maintain his rulership of this world system and to further extend his rulership of the world system. His goal, which will in the end be thwarted, is to rule over the whole of the earth through establishing a combined government and religion, which the scriptures identifies as “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of The Abominations of The Earth”. The scripture says²⁶ “the Great Harlot” along with the kings of the earth “have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the (scarlet) beast” which is the Antichrist²⁷. Much has been discussed and there is much to be discussed about the identity of the Antichrist and also of “the Great Harlot”. It is not the purpose

²³ Revelation 2:24

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 2:11

²⁵ John 16:11

²⁶ Revelation 17:1-18

²⁷ Regardless of whether the Antichrist is an individual or a system.

of this message to further that discussion. But later, I will comment on the nature and meaning of her name – “Harlot”, for THAT is the root issue regarding Satan, the people of the earth, and God.

So, if we accept that this is, in fact, Satan’s agenda in the world, should it not be obvious that the greater the role human government plays in the lives of people, the more dependent upon human government people become, and the greater control human government has over every area of our lives? Should it be at all surprising, then, to see, particularly with the younger generations, an increased interest in more socialized forms of human government²⁸. And does it not make sense that the current activities of human governments like enforcing “social distancing”, closing down private businesses, inhibiting citizen gatherings and travel, mandating vaccinations, the threats of a police state and martial law, along with government provision of “bail-out” “benefits” for citizens, as well as businesses and corporations - while at the same time, exercising their power to dictate what

²⁸ The Populist and Nationalist resurgence around the world is a natural and very definite reaction to the general movement towards totalitarianism. But because of what I see in scripture, I must conclude that the apparent success of these resistance movements is temporary, and possibly very soon and very quickly, totalitarianism will rule the day.

some factories must manufacture²⁹ - along with increased government regulation of how we live out our faith and worship of God, all add up to furthering Satan's agenda "to steal and kill and destroy" in the lives of the people whom Jesus came to set free?³⁰ And should it not be obvious that the various aspects of globalization being established in the nations of the world all serve to assist and accelerate Satan's rule and control over the whole of the world system?

Whereas, God's intention was that He Himself, not human governments, would be the Source for the provision and supervision of all the needs of humanity. Even if those in the world reject God's intention, Christians are supposed to align themselves with it. According to Romans 13:1-7, I understand the only mandates God has given human government is to protect citizens from transgression and to punish law breakers. I do not see anywhere in the New Testament the concept of human government being responsible for the provision of any other needs of humanity. He has called His Church to "bear one another's burden" and to "do good to all people, especially to

²⁹ All of these kinds of government controls of the business sector are earmarks of Fascism.

³⁰ John 10:10; Isaiah 42:1; 61:1; Matthew 12:18; Luke 4:18.

those who are of the household of faith”;³¹ but too many Christians are abdicating that calling and insisting that human government carry out that responsibility through various policies and programs of political parties. For example, American Evangelical Christians have largely aligned themselves with the Republican Party, as American Progressive Christians have aligned themselves with the Democratic Party.

Without going into any details of political philosophy and world politics, suffice to say that in the past century the nations of the world have become increasingly convinced that we all need to collectively embrace the various aspects of globalization in order to insure our common economic survival and prosperity – even to “eliminate poverty”, which Jesus said would always remain with us - and that we need band together militarily in order to keep “rogue nations” in check; and we need to nurture ecumenical and “inter-faith” programs to help promote tolerance and prevent “hate crimes”; and now in “the present situation”, we need to embrace various efforts of world-wide co-operation, supervision, and eventually legislation in order to insure the collective health of our global family. The bottom line is this: the more totalitarian our

³¹ Galatians 6:2, 10.

human governments become, the further along Satan has moved the world system towards the goal of his agenda.

In saying all this, I am *not* saying that we can *do* anything to stop Satan's agenda – "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this."³² It is more of a matter of *not doing* what we have been doing and, in the future *not doing* what Satan would tempt us to do. And we will begin to discuss that now.

³² Isaiah 9:7, 37:32; 2 Kings 19:31.

God's Agenda

Let's consider God's agenda in the midst of "the present situation". Let's look at that Old Testament "Parable of the Census & the Pestilence" in 1 Chronicles 21:

1Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. 2So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me *word* that I may know their number." 3Joab said, "May the Lord add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?" 4Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. 5Joab gave the number of the census of *all* the people to David. And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and Judah *was* 470,000 men who drew the sword. 6But he did not number Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.

7God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel. 8David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

9The Lord spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying, 10"Go and speak to David, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, "I offer you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you." ' ' " 11So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Take for yourself 12either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes *you*, or else three days of the sword of the Lord, even pestilence in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now, therefore, consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me." 13David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into the hand of man."

14So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel; 70,000 men of Israel fell."

The Census & the Pestilence.

As in the story of Job³³, we see that God allowed Satan to test David – in this instance, with the idea of taking a census. Joab had tried to persuade David to deal with the Lord in a more faithful manner: “Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?’ Nevertheless, the king’s word prevailed against Joab.”³⁴ David could have turned back, and returned to the way of God, but he didn’t. And, in this instance, as a leader of God’s people, he led them contrary to the way of God.

It wasn’t only David who displeased God. Even before the census fiasco, God was displeased with the whole nation because of their chronic unfaithfulness. Moreover, going along with the program of a duplicitous spiritual leader is no excuse for the people of God. So, God saw fit for the pestilence to come upon both the king and the people - the shepherd and the flock alike.

God’s anger and judgment had already been displayed earlier under David’s leadership. When he had first taken leadership of Israel, David ordered the Ark of the Covenant to be moved from

³³ Job 1:8-12.

³⁴ 1 Chronicles 21:3b-4a.

Kiriath-jearim to Hebron.³⁵ But, the project was not carried out properly, and the Lord was displeased and angered, resulting in the death of Uzza. Later, David told the Levites regarding this: “Because *you* (the consecrated Levites) did not carry it as God directed the first time, the Lord our God made an angry outburst against us, for *we* (the whole nation) did not seek Him in accordance with the ordinance.”³⁶

Furthermore, while “God has not destined us for wrath”,³⁷ we Christians are not exempt from God’s judgments in the world. Citing 1 Corinthians 11:29-32, John Piper offers:

“God sometimes inflicts sickness on his people as a purifying and rescuing judgment, which is not a condemnation, but an act of mercy for his saving purposes. ... In other words, some of us die of illnesses ‘so that we may not be condemned along with the world’ (v. 32). If he can do that in a few of his loved ones in Corinth, he can do it to many, including by the coronavirus. And not just because of abusing the Lord’s Supper, but also for other kinds of sinful trajectories — though not all death is for a particular sin.”

³⁵ 1 Chronicles 13

³⁶ 1 Chronicles 15:13 (AMP)

³⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:9

But, why was the Lord Displeased?

This is the key to understanding the Lord's agenda in "the present situation"!

In the Old testament, **one could take a census of only that which belonged to you.** This is the reason why the Lord said to Moses: "When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord (i.e. "a contribution to the Lord to make atonement for your souls"), when you number them, so that there will be no plague among them when you number them."³⁸ Just as we "are not our own". We "belong to Christ" because "we were bought with a price" and are now "the temple of the Holy Spirit",³⁹ so too, the people of God did not belong to themselves or to Moses. They belonged to the Lord, and, under the Old Covenant, they had to pay a price – a contribution to the Lord for the atoning sacrifices conducted in the sanctuary.⁴⁰ But God had not told David to take a census, nor to collect a contribution from the people. David had no right to take a census, because the people of God did not

³⁸ Exodus 30:12. Cf. Numbers 1:1-4, 17-19.

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

⁴⁰ Exodus 30:11-13.

belong to David. They belonged to God. We belong to God. We do not belong to any man of God, nor any king of the earth, nor even to ourselves. THAT was the issue which did – and still does – displease God. It was the same issue as when the people chose Saul to be their king instead of the Lord.⁴¹ And it is the same issue today with Christians pledging their hearts' allegiance to human kings and governments – it is an abomination to the Lord! We belong ONLY to God. He is a jealous God.⁴²

Earlier, I had said that I would discuss the nature and meaning of the name “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of The Abominations of The Earth”. THIS is the root issue regarding God and His people. The feminine form of the Greek word in Revelation 17 is *porne*.⁴³ The word is translated as “harlot”, a whore, a prostitute. Its root word is the Greek word, *pernemi*, which means “to make merchandise”, “to sell”. We see a reference to her selling herself and the “merchants of the world” - kings and “those who dwell on the earth”⁴⁴ - making merchandise

⁴¹ Read 1 Samuel 8. Read it again!

⁴² Exodus 20:5, 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9, 6:15; Joshua 24:19; Nahum 1:2; 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Ezekiel 39:25.

⁴³ Strong's # 4204. The masculine form is pornos.

⁴⁴ Revelation 17:8

of her in several verses in Revelation 18.⁴⁵ Yes, she sells herself to the kings of the world and they make merchandise of her. We see the same phenomenon in the Old Testament, when Israel asked for a human king. The Lord told his people, through Samuel, that, in the end, human kings would use and merchandise His people: They will enslave your children to his servants. They will use your children to fight and die in wars. They will take possession of a portion of everything you own. “Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves....”⁴⁶ Jesus also warned us: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”⁴⁷ *We will always serve our source.* And “serving” is an aspect of worship. So, many essentially succumb to “emperor worship”. Again, this spirit of harlotry, looking to, trusting in, depending upon, consequently selling ourselves to and pledging our hearts’ allegiance human government instead of to the Lord of lords and the King of kings, is an abomination and grievous to the Lord, because we are His people, and we belong ONLY to Him. He is a jealous God.⁴⁸ Who do we belong to? Where is our hearts’ allegiance?

⁴⁵ Revelation 18:3, 9, 11, 15, 23.

⁴⁶ Cf. 1 Samuel 8:9-18.

⁴⁷ Matthew 6:21

⁴⁸ Exodus 20:P5, 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9, 6:15; Joshua 24:19; Nahum 1:2; 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Ezekiel 39:25.

Who do you belong to?

I dealt only with verses 1-14 of 1 Chronicles 21. I believe there are many lessons for us in the rest of the chapter, but for now, I feel constrained to only focus on the root issue regarding the Lord and His people in this parable - WHO DO YOU BELONG TO?

**“You were bought with a price,
do not become slaves of men.”**

1 Corinthians 7:23

“Come, let us return to the LORD.

For He has torn us, but He will heal us;
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.

He will revive us after two days;

He will raise us up on the third day,
That we may live before Him.

So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.

His going forth is as certain as the dawn;
And He will come to us like the rain,
Like the spring rain watering the earth.

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?

What shall I do with you, O Judah?

For your loyalty is like a morning cloud

And like the dew which goes away early.

Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets;

I have slain them by the words of My mouth;

And the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth.

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,

And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”⁴⁹

The last verse of Hosea 6 says, “There is a harvest appointed for you, when I restore the fortunes of My people.”⁵⁰ If, in fact, we are in a season of new planting and harvest at the beginning of the Lord’s spiritual calendar, what might the Divine Husbandman be WORKING OUT IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM? While the Husbandman is having “prescribed burns” to His fields to improve the soil, He is “breaking up the fallow ground” in our hearts, and planting new seed during “this present situation”. We hear every day in the media what is going on in the world during “this present

⁴⁹ Hosea 6:1-6

⁵⁰ i.e. Verse 11

situation”. BUT, THIS IS WHAT’S GOING ON IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM:

Shaking BOTH the Material & the Spiritual Realms

It is written in the Letter to the Hebrews⁵¹:

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. ²⁶ And His voice **shook the earth** then, but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more **I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.**” ²⁷ This *expression*, “Yet once more,” denotes *the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.* ²⁸ Therefore, since we receive *a kingdom which cannot be shaken*, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.”

The word translated “heaven” in this passage is of interest. The Greek word is *ouranos*, ⁵² meaning literally, “the heights” or “the high places”. In their comments on this word in this passage, both Adam Clarke and Kell & Delitzsch make reference to political and economic upheavals in the earth.

⁵¹ Hebrews 12:25-29. Cf. Haggai 2:6.

⁵² Strong’s # 3772

I believe it can also refer to *the spiritual realm* which is created – namely, “the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.”⁵³ These are also being both stirred up and shaken.

By extension, the word refers to *the dwelling place of God*.⁵⁴ The apostle Paul was “caught up” there.⁵⁵ It is the place from which angels ascend and descend.⁵⁶ It is the place which Christ descended from,⁵⁷ and ascended to,⁵⁸ as well as, the place where He is now seated at the right hand of God,⁵⁹. It is also the place from which Christ will come again with His angels to gather His saints.⁶⁰ And, it is the place of our citizenship.⁶¹ This is the place where God is, and I believe this passage is indicating that this place is also “shaking and moving”, and God Himself is getting stirred up, arising, and on the move!

⁵³ Ephesians 6:12

⁵⁴ *Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*

⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 12:2

⁵⁶ Matthew 18:10, 22:30.

⁵⁷ John 3:13, 31; 6:38,42.

⁵⁸ Hebrews 4:14; Ephesians 4:10

⁵⁹ Hebrews 8:1; 1 Peter 3:22; Cf. Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24

⁶⁰ Matthew 24:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:7

⁶¹ Philippians 3:20

The Wilderness

A survey of scripture will show that a fresh new movement of God's Spirit frequently begins **In the Wilderness**.

And the people of God have often found themselves **In the Wilderness**.⁶²

Even today, images on the screen of deserted city streets and venues make our outside world look like a wilderness. And for most, induced isolation has also turned their everyday lives into a wilderness-type experience.

A survey of scripture will show that a fresh new movement of God's Spirit frequently begins In the Wilderness.

And the people of God have often found themselves in the wilderness.⁶³

But what do you expect to see in the wilderness?⁶⁴

⁶² Acts 7:38

⁶³ Acts 7:38

⁶⁴ Cf. Matthew 11

God has a purpose
in the wilderness.

He wants His people to SEE
- “Something Better”.⁶⁵

People see what they want to see
- usually quail.⁶⁶

“But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?”

Our father of faith “obeyed to GO OUT
as a sojourner in the land of promise”.⁶⁷

It takes faith to see your way through the wilderness.

In the Wilderness of Sin⁶⁸ -

“Moses saw Him who is invisible”.⁶⁹

In the wilderness of Ziph⁷⁰ -

those who were “in distress, in debt and discontented”

⁶⁵ Viz. JESUS. The basic theme of the Book of Hebrews is found in the word “better,” in describing the superiority of Christ in both His person and His work. Christ provides: • Better revelation. 1:1-2 • Better expectation. 6:9 • Better priesthood. 7:7-11, 20-28 • Better hope. 7:19 • Better testament, covenant. 7:22, 8:6 • Better promises. 8:6 • Better sacrifices. 8:6 • Better possessions. 10:34 • Better country. 11:16 • Better resurrection. 11:35 • Better things. 11:40; 12:24

⁶⁶ Exodus 16; Numbers 11.

⁶⁷ Hebrews 11:9

⁶⁸ Exodus 16-17; Numbers 33-34; Deuteronomy 32:51

⁶⁹ Hebrews 11:27

⁷⁰ 1 Samuel 23:14; 26:1-2

saw the difference between Saul and David⁷¹

- "The Glory of Israel".⁷²

In the Wilderness of the People⁷³ -

a remnant saw the restoration of

"The city which has foundations,
whose architect and builder is God".⁷⁴

In the Wilderness of Judea⁷⁵ -

many heard the crying, WENT OUT,

and saw one decrease and Another increase.⁷⁶

"But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?"

God always "makes a way in the wilderness".

He always "makes rivers in the desert".

And He always "does a new thing" in the wilderness.⁷⁷

Yes, when Gomer was allured into the Wilderness of Trouble⁷⁸,

she learned to sing a song of Hope to her Husband

⁷¹ 1 Samuel 22:1-2; 23:13; 1 Chronicles 11:15

⁷² Micah 1:15

⁷³ Ezekiel 20:35 Or the wilderness of the "tribe", or "flock", or "congregation".

⁷⁴ Hebrews 11:10

⁷⁵ Matthew 3:1-3

⁷⁶ John 3:30

⁷⁷ Isaiah 43:19

⁷⁸ Hosea 2:14-15 Viz. "Achor" which means "Trouble".

and was betrothed to Him forever in faithfulness.⁷⁹

So, you have to GO OUT into the wilderness in order to SEE.

But one of two things will happen:

You will either SEE JESUS,

or you will die of leanness, rebellion or idolatry.

“But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?”

⁷⁹ Hosea 2:19-20

The Spirit Gives Life⁸⁰

“In Christ you are being built together into a dwelling of God
In the Spirit.”⁸¹

Are you finding yourself growing in revelation and relationship with Christ in “this present situation”?

With your induced solitude, are you growing in spiritual disciplines, learning to hear the voice of your Chief Shepherd, and learning more about being led by the Spirit?

Is your life becoming more and more God-Centered?

Are you experiencing more meaningful fellowship of the Spirit one-on-one with your brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Are you becoming totally convinced that “church” is not something you go to, or some activity that you do, but something you already are?

⁸⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:6 “A new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

⁸¹ 1 Peter 2:5

Have you realized that you will not necessarily die spiritually, if your local church organization cannot afford the upkeep on its campus facility or pay its pay taxes (if the present administration in the government changes and the 501c exemption is revoked?)

Are you starting to get somewhat of a vision for just one church in a locality, collectively living out the New Covenant “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”, and reflecting the image of Christ to the world, all under the governorship of the Holy Spirit?

Are you seeing more clearly the difference between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world? Are you identifying more as a disciple of the kingdom, a sojourner in this world, and an ambassador whose citizenship is in heaven? Are you more in the world and less of it?

Did you learn the lesson of
The Parable of the Census & the Pestilence?