

STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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A Place Where God Shall Choose to Cause His Name to Dwell

by Dr. H. T. Spence, President

*Then there shall be a place which
the LORD your God shall choose to
cause his name to dwell there*
(Deuteronomy 12:11)

In the last thirty days of his life, the seasoned leader Moses gave his final words to the second generation of the Exodus from Egypt. These words are found in the book of Deuteronomy. This final book of the Pentateuch covers a time of sixty days: one month for Moses' teachings and another month for Israel to mourn Moses' death.

The words of this concluding book of Moses are dedicated to the second generation. The appointed prophet rehearsed the history of the wilderness wanderings beginning with the first generation's rejection of the land at Kadesh-Barnea. Also in this

book, the Law is given again for a second generation to be freshly cognizant of it. However, this time Moses gives the Law with the emphasis upon *love* for God. It is love for Him that will enable the children of the first generation to keep the Law.

A Special Place Where God Would Place His Name

When Moses gave his warnings and exhortations (chapters 8-11), he foretold in chapter twelve of a place in the future that God would appoint for true worship. Although he does not tell them the name of this place, he does simply declare that they are to destroy and break down all the images and the pillars that will be found there. It is to be a place "which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his

name to dwell there" (12:11). This statement is found in 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, and 26. The place that God would honor with His Name was finally revealed in the days of David: it is the city of Jerusalem or "Yeru-Shalem," meaning "the foundation of Shalem or Salem."

In a brief history of this city's introduction to the Israelites, we find that the people who dwelt in the city of Jerusalem and the surrounding hill country during the days of Joshua and the judges were termed Jebusites in the biblical text (Numbers 13:29; Joshua 15:8). The Jebusites were a Canaanite tribe. Early in the days of the judges, the men of Judah captured the Jebusite Jerusalem and burned it (Judges 1:8). The Jebusites reoccupied and rebuilt the city (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21). Jerusalem was often called Jebus during the period before David. Literary evidence makes it clear that Jerusalem and its shortened form, Salem, were names used for the city almost a millennium before David.

The first seven years when David

reigned only over the tribe of Judah, the capital of his kingdom was at Hebron. But when he became ruler over all Israel, a more centrally located city was highly desirable for him. Jerusalem, the Jebusite city on the border of Judah and Benjamin, was ideally situated. Since it had not been incorporated into either tribe, it could be conquered and made into royal territory without interfering with existing tribal holdings. When Jerusalem became David's political capital, he determined to make it the religious capital as well. He sent for the ark, which had had no permanent abode since it had fallen into the hands of the Philistines. Amid great festivity, David brought the ark to Jerusalem and placed it inside a specially prepared tent (II Samuel 6:12-19). After David had built a house for himself, he felt that it would be appropriate to build a suitable house to serve as a sanctuary for Yahweh, Israel's God. The prophet Nathan was at first enthusiastic about the idea, but he later brought a message to David, informing the king that he should not build the house but that his son (Solomon) would do so. Although David did not build the Temple, he did purchase the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite on which the Temple was later built. The threshing floor was located north of David's city, presumably outside the walls. The purchase of Araunah's threshing floor and the erection of an altar for burnt offerings and peace offerings appear to be the last official acts of David. When Solomon built the Temple, the prophecy of Moses became complete: God had placed His Name in a city.

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This city is also called "Ariel" in Isaiah 29:1, which is the feminine form of Othniel, the "Lion of God" or the "Lioness of God." In Isaiah 1:26 it is called the "City of Righteousness"; in Isaiah 48:2, it is called "The Holy City"; and its final name, during the Millennium, will be "Jehovah Shammah," "The Lord is There" (Ezekiel 48:35).

The "Shekina" manifested glory of God was evident in those early years after its capture by David. This notable king, "a man after God's own heart," moved the ark of the covenant to the city. He prepared abundantly for the building of the Temple by enlarging the Levites into twenty-four courses of service and providing music with thousands of singers and instrumentalists. Glory and majesty enveloped and empowered the worship when the magnificent Temple was dedicated to God. Yes, the historical record of the Scriptures gives worthy note of God's filling this city with His Name and presence.

When God Removes His Name from the Place

However, the Israelites and their kings following Solomon began to change from their allegiance to God's Word. As history gave growing evidence to the falling away of Israel, God's presence began to withdraw in stages. Apart from revivals during the days of Hezekiah and Josiah, it was evident that the Lord was withdrawing Himself from the very city in which He had placed His Name. During the days of the prophet Jeremiah, the people reacted to his prophecies of judgment by crying "the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord." They

refused to believe that God would ever leave His appointed city because the Temple was still there. However, Jeremiah told them God would leave His beloved city because His people had left God.

The Process of God's Leaving a People

In 606 BC (Usher), the inevitable happened: God had fully withdrawn His presence. The withdrawal of God's presence is given in stages presented by the prophet Ezekiel. He saw in prophetic vision the glory of the Lord leave the Holy of Holies and move to the threshold of the door of the Temple where it lingered (Ezekiel 10:4). Then the glory of the Lord removed itself from the door and went across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives and lingered there for another three years. Finally, it left Jerusalem (11:23) and has been absent until this day.

This withdrawal does not take place overnight, whether in an individual's life, a church, or a Christian college or university. II Chronicles 36:15-16 states,

And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, **till there was no remedy.**

It was as if God had taken every providential circumstance to speak

to them until the pharmaceutical shelf of heaven was empty; there was nothing else He could do. He left His beloved city and withdrew His Name from the Chosen One. It finally became the "Ichabod" of humanity: the glory of the Lord had departed.

The Process of a People Leaving God

The three deportations in the Babylonian Captivity give us a classic insight into the process of an individual, or a church, or a Christian school or college leaving God. The Scriptures note in the first deportation that the earliest possessions taken in the captivity were the precious things. The list includes the vessels and furniture of the Temple as well as any children without blemish, well-favored, skillful in wisdom, cunning in knowledge, those who had the ability to stand in the King's palace. The vessels and the furniture of the Temple—yes, the precious things—are the first to go. A falling away begins in the heart.

In this first spiritual deportation, communion is left off with God, as well as prayer, daily Bible reading, and private meditation throughout the hours of the day. The concern for the sacred vessels seems to disappear: the brazen laver, for washing of the priests' hands and feet and the checking for blemishes; the table of shewbread, containing the "Bread of His Presence"; the candlestick, for walking in the light; the golden altar of incense, for praise and meditation; the Shekinah Glory of the ark, found in the Holy of Holies; the possession of communion with God. Truly, these are

the first evidences of God's leaving His people. Proverbs 6:26 states that "the adulteress will hunt for the precious life." Infidelity of heart comes before infidelity of life. Communion is then exchanged for the church and school programs. Knowledge of Scripture and skillfulness of wisdom and preaching is exchanged for psychology and pastoral counseling. There comes the leaning more to the human side for a solution to the church's problems rather than to God, and thus a spiritual death now commences. During this time there will be less emphasis on prayer and more on programs to cover up for the secret backslidings of heart. In addition, the music will begin the change with the toleration of choruses, arrangements, and instrumentation that flirts with the perimeter of the contemporary.

The second deportation was issued when Nebuchadnezzar came in 597 BC. A famine prevailed in the city of Jerusalem, causing a lack of bread for the people of the land; the city was broken up; all the men of war fled at night by way of the gate between the two walls.

This second spiritual deportation reflects the next evidences of that which is left off with God. There is a famine of sound, solid, biblical preaching marked by shallowness in the pulpit. There seems to be less time for prayer yet an increased involvement of administration. Sadly, the preacher becomes more identified as a "joker" or "flirt." Truth may be preached, but it is sterile, being no longer indited with freshness by the Holy Spirit. The men of war are found fleeing during the besiegements by the enemy; people

enter into confusion about what is right and wrong. Church politics pound the pulpit while the young men become afraid to stand for what they know to be true. How tragic it all becomes! King Zedekiah's children were slain and his own eyes gouged out. Yes, homes will be affected; the children will no longer see any principle of biblical separation. They will be the ones to die spiritually in the second stage of the captivity. Sight will be lost, and what light is left will turn into darkness.

The final evidence, as depicted in 586 BC during the third deportation, is found in II Kings 25:9-10, with the burning of the city and the breaking down of the walls. Final destruction is its postlude. How ironic that even when spirituality is gone, the facilities of God's people could continue to be beautiful and perhaps, even more elaborate; the headquarters, more prestigious; even the preachers could have the tailored, polished look and suave speech, but spiritually, the city is *dead*.

At this time, evangelism could become the greater cry over the need of revival among God's own people. The pulpit could give way to psychological addresses and even condemnation of abortion and the social problems of the times, while the people enter into the existential world of no absolutes, viewing all things as relative. The music will play on, yet all watered down with no conviction. The heart will believe everything is all right, because the church program is bursting at the seams. Have we soon forgotten Jimmy Swaggart, the man who many Fundamentalists believed was the exception to the Charis-

matic froth, *until* his lifestyle was unveiled before the world? He was the man who seemed to be anointed, yet it was the mere human power of speech and personality, for God does not anoint carnality, ungodliness, and error!

Other Places that God Chose to Put His Name in History

Honorable records of the past give us accounts of places where God condescended, came into history, and chose to put His Name. **Harvard College** was a place that God chose to do so. In 1636, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony voted to give 400 pounds towards the beginning of this school. John Harvard gave one half of his estate towards the erecting of this college for the training of preachers. Because of this endowment, the school was named in his honor. Harvard was built on godly men and their character, without the vast endowments, massive libraries, complex laboratories, and professional athletic facilities we have come to associate with university life. The main end of life and study at Harvard was to know God and His Son Jesus Christ so that He would become the foundation of learning. This institution knew the presence of God; and a number of godly preachers stepped forward from its early years. However, by the 1700s, Harvard was rapidly entering Unitarianism, and today it is the citadel for secular humanism. Harvard College was a place where God at one time had His Name, but this is no more!

Yale College was another place where God did place His Name. It started under men such as Reverend

John Davenport, Reverend James Pierpont, and Rev. Samuel Andrew. It received its name from the businessman Elihu Yale who gave much of his wealth to the little school. Over the years it knew such godly men as David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, and the famous Timothy Dwight under whose influence by God the Second Great Awakening broke. Nevertheless, Yale University, amidst its vast archives of rare books written by many godly men, along with the Beinecke Library and its copy of the Gutenberg Bible, fell into the new theologies of later generations. Presently, it is a school given to secularism and Neo-orthodoxy. Yes, Yale was a place where God at one time had His Name, but it is no more!

Another place where God placed His name was the small, humble town of **Northfield**, Massachusetts, D. L. Moody's birthplace. When Moody returned to Northfield after his evangelistic tour of Great Britain, he went home to Northfield to rest. There he conceived a plan to make possible an education for girls who were born to the unstimulating routine of farm life. He opened a school for girls in 1879 with 25 pupils. Then in 1881, he opened a school for young men just five miles away from Northfield; it was called Mount Hermon. This also was the place Camp Northfield was held annually where some of the greatest preachers on both sides of the Atlantic preached. A deeper life for the Christian was emphasized here by Moody, R. A. Torrey, Sankey, and others. But one may travel there today and view the beautiful campus overlooking the Connecticut River, its rolling hills with Moody

and his wife buried on Little Round Top (as he called it). The birthplace is still there; but a large private high school fills the old historical facilities and is ranked number three in the nation for its academics. But the message of Moody is gone, along with the genuine shouts of revival. It is made clear in the present school's handbook that the vision of today is *not* that of Moody's. Yes, Northfield was a place where God at one time placed His Name, but it is no more!

The **Keswick** camp meetings of England bring to mind the place where great men of Scripture and pious living met and preached. How often we read Andrew Murray's books and never realize the depth of heart in sanctification this man believed in and all of those who preached in those meetings. Keswick truly influenced Christians to deep spirituality for many years, but it is no longer true. Neo-Evangelicalism has now taken over this spiritual haven of the past. Keswick was a place where God at one time placed His Name, but it is no more!

The list could go on to include Westminster Theological Seminary started by J. Gresham Machen, Nyack College started by the great missionary visionary A. B. Simpson, Moody Bible Institute started by D. L. Moody for the need of workers in his evangelistic campaigns, Princeton University, Oberlin College, Fuller Theological Seminary. Their past had the presence of God, but He is found no more in such places. God's presence in the past does not guarantee its continuation for the future.

Conclusion

The Fundamentalist movement was birthed of God to confront the giants of Liberalism and Modernism. Its history proved that the Lord chose to place His Name within the movement. It even weathered the storm of the birth of Neo-Evangelicalism and the Charismatic movement. Christian schools, colleges and universities were born in the Fundamentalist wake of power from God. Our own beloved school of Foundations Bible College was born in a whirlwind of providence with no money and no organizational assistance. Nevertheless, a remnant of people, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit through our founder, a man of deep godliness and piety, honorably desired the depth of the Word of God and a holy life in Christ. They wanted a Bible college to be a holy laboratory where anything that is true could be said without the fear of condemnation by a denominational board or bishop. Its legacy was the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith with distinctions that called to a higher, nobler life in Christ, a separatist position that longed for an honorable consecrated life. Such a position hates legalism, but it also hates worldliness and carnality. Every true, Bible-based place that takes its stand against the apostasy will give evidence of God choosing it for His Name.

But time eventually brings a ministry to its second, third and fourth generations. The past of God's overwhelming blessings of power and anointing does not guarantee the future will be the same. Every generation must stand on its own before God, and God will either continue His blessings or

begin withdrawing His blessings from a godly place, even if it flourishes outwardly. The heart could become diseased and the inner soul die while the outer shell continues to be a showpiece of the past. Therefore, every generation of a ministry must guard and protect the legacy of its birth, for that is why God chose to put His Name among them. It must also protect its standards, for they were the outflow of an inner working of that Name. Otherwise, the very place in which God chose for His Name to dwell could know the slow withdrawal of that Name, and the place ultimately become known as a place of compromise and façade.

It is possible to ride on the glory of the past and then shake oneself as Samson did, expecting the anointing of God to be present. It is possible to convince oneself, through a slow process of self-deception, that nothing has changed. And yet, there has been change. Recent paths of debris and the cry of concerned brethren have been God's call of warning to His place. Many of God's promises are conditional: His presence in a place is conditional to the hearts of its people. We must tenaciously not only hold to the legacy of the past but also keep the legacy's heart and very soul that made it great. Dare we cry, "The Temple of the Lord," as if God would *never* leave us? For when God's people leave Him, He will not only eventually leave them but also destroy the very temple He gave. This too is part of the message of the true Fundamentalist.

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