

TEKEL: TIME FOR REFLECTION

It is my prayer that the fainthearted will find courage and the strong will be encouraged in their walk with Christ. If we pray sincerely “and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” as recorded in the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples in St. Matthew 6: 9-14, this message will encourage us. If we take seriously the statement of Jesus, “be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect”, this message too should encourage us. If we embrace the message in Ephesians 4: 11-14, we will see that the 14th verse says, “till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Background (Ethanin, October, 5, 6 539 BCE, Gregorian Calendar) King Belshazzar of the great Babylonian Empire held a great wine banquet in his palace. His princes, high officials, wives and concubines were all in attendance. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone. It is of significance to note the receptacles from which they drank wine. The king demanded that the silver and golden vessels dedicated for consecrated and divine worship in the temple at Jerusalem brought to Babylon during captivity be used to serve his guests. In their intoxicated state; whilst having a good time, something bizarre occurred. The fingers of a man’s hand appeared on the plaster wall against the sinister backdrop of the shadow cast by the candlesticks. This hand was mobile as the fingers wrote a message on the wall. This message caused consternation and great fear, emotionally and physically, to the king. His thoughts were troubled. His muscles and nerves became unstable to the extent that the joints of his lower body shook.

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He could not understand the meaning of the message but knew that he needed immediate interpretation. He called for all his advisors, astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers and wise men of Babylon to provide interpretation. He offered gifts and promotions but no one could read the writing or interpret the message on the wall.

Daniel, the prophet of the God of Israel, was consulted upon the advice of the Queen. Daniel became well-known for interpreting dreams and hard-sayings during the time of Belshazzar's father, King Nebuchadnezzar. Not only was he wise but he had an excellent spirit. Daniel unscrambled the code and gave the interpretation:

- Mene - God hath numbered the Kingdom and finished it.
- Tekel -Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.
- Peres -The Kingdom is divided and given to the needs of the Medes and Persians.

It is on the words Tekel, verse 27, that we will focus. "Weighed in the balance and found wanting." And from this is the topic found: "Time for Reflection".

The month of Abib (commonly called April) [Exodus 13:4] is celebrated according to the Scriptures by the Church of God and Saints of Christ as the beginning of months. It is the New Year. This month is of great significance for deliverance because it is in this self-same month that our forefathers, the children of Israel, were delivered from bondage out of Egypt. It was also in this month that Jesus was not only born but also crucified and resurrected to redeem mankind from the bondage of sin. So we celebrate with great joy during the Feast of the Lord's Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. In the world at large, at the start of the New Year, which some celebrate in Tebeth (January), individuals are known to make New Year resolutions which usually indicate making a change for the better. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above..." (Colossians 3:1) The New Year of Abib is indeed a time for reflection. Any child of God considers the past year with a spirit of thanksgiving. One might question, "what for? I've had major problems!" Let us rethink. God has watched over us for the past twelve months, despite our failings and has extended his loving kindness and tender mercies daily. He has also "winked at our foolishness with longsuffering."

We are therefore truly thankful and we embrace the message of 1st Thessalonians 5:18, "In

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everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Oh yes! We should give thanks unto the Lord for He is good.

Next, let us engage in the global reflection of the Church of God and Saints of Christ. God has kept His church. He has kept His word ... "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last times." (I Peter 1:5) "And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed. The Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Daniel 2:44.

Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (St. Matthew 16:18) So we give thanks unto the Lord for He is good despite our failings. Let us reflect on the people of God living in a world of sin, of vice, and moral decadence. Jesus warned as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man. We see through whatever our method of following the news that the level of violent crimes and killings has escalated among all age groups on a daily basis.

In Genesis 6:11-13, there is a description of the state of society in the days of Noah. God saw that mankind was corrupt and that the earth was full of violence and decided that He would destroy the people. Sound familiar? The love of many has waxed cold because iniquity abounds. There are wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes in diverse places, pestilence and famine as prophesized by Jesus. The future looks grim against the backdrop of sin. Great tribulation is on the way but Christ is also on his way back.

Let us move to personal reflections. This is a ticklish assignment which depends on our level of integrity. It can be tough to look at ones self; yet one must be brave. Here is the baseline. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? (Romans 6, verses 1-3)

Have we walked in the will of God or have our actions been driven by self-will? That is to be pleasure-seeking and arrogant. II Peter 2, verse 10, lists the behaviors that are out of the will of God, "walking after the flesh and the lust of uncleanness, despising governments, presumptuous, self-willed, speaking evil of dignitaries" whew!

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But, seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. (St. Matthew 6:33)

We have prayed "Thy will be done in earth" but have we acted out "my will be done"? "I have to do what I have to do" as we engage in rebellion, stiff-neckedness, hard-hearted behavior? "The commandment is a lamp and the law is light; reproofs of instructions are the way of life." Where have we placed the mirror which is the Word of God? Have we looked in it? Are our ears stopped and our eyes closed? In the Book of James, Chapter one, verse 25, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the Word, this man shall be blessed in his deeds. "

In the same James the 4th Chapter verse 11, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law. But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."

What can we learn from the past so that we can look ahead with hope? God is a deliverer; He delivered our forefathers. He caused the Red Sea to dry up and our enemies to be drowned. So, if we want deliverance from destruction, we must turn to Him. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego all experienced personal deliverance while in captivity in Babylon.

David left on record how to receive protection. Psalms 91:1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Deliverance and victory comes with a price. The price is called repentance and humility. Psalms 51 verses 1-12 and verses 17-18; David acknowledged his failings and sought cleansing, purging and restoration. Deuteronomy 28: 1-14 lists the blessings and verses 15-68, the cursings that one receives and they are all based on obedience to God's law. Let us listen to the voice of God and keep His commandments; don't be a "scoffer and scorner."

What do we look to for the future as we reflect? Christ will return with his hands full of rewards. There is a time of great tribulation ahead. He will gather his elect from the four winds of heaven and it shall be said in that day, "Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him... For immediate consideration or reflection, what is in your vessel?"

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What are you carrying in your vessel? Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you? (I Thessalonians 4:4)

The five wise virgins kept oil in their vessels as they watched for the bridegroom to come. (St. Matthew 25:4) Let us look to the future with hope knowing that we serve a God who is **the Great Deliverer**. It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pastures. May we look to Him as we place our feet in the paths of righteousness.

To the faint of heart, be strong in the Lord; He is your deliverer. To the strong, remember the joy of the Lord is your strength.