

## PARABLE OF THE TREE AND THE STORM : PART 1

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Scripture Interprets Scripture, Backslidden Leadership Of Ephraim And Judah, False Prophets: I Sent Them Not, Lessons From Old Testament Stories, Danger Of False Doctrines Then And Now, Place Your Faith Only In God's Word, Example Of The Bereans: Study The Word Diligently, Preaching Positive Fruit And Persecution, Inspiration And Power Of God's Holy Word, Rejection By Workers Of Darkness, Nothing Is Hid From God

As my longtime friends will know, for many years now it has been my personal practice to encourage my readers to look to the Holy Scriptures, in order to gain a proper understanding regarding what is true and what is false insofar as Christian doctrine is concerned. As I point out in quite a few of my articles, I hold firmly to the belief that in many cases-- if not in all cases -- God's Word interprets itself. In other words, Scripture explains Scripture. One set of verses which I have often used to explain this concept, is the following that is found in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah:

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:"  
Isaiah 28:9-10, KJV

Sadly, if you take the time to read the verses which surround the ones which I have quoted above, you will discover that these words were spoken in harsh judgment against the drunk false prophets and wayward priests of Ephraim -- that is, the northern kingdom of Israel -- who were not adhering to the precepts of the Lord as they were supposed to do. Rather than teaching the Israelites sound doctrine, these false shepherds were speaking lies, deceit, and false promises of peace and safety for their own profit. Much like today in the USA, they were politically-correct menpleasers who were tickling the ears of both the political leadership, as well as the common people, because this is precisely what they wanted to hear. As I point out in articles such as "The Children of God and Politics" and "The Fruits of Disobedience", it was not long afterward that the land of Ephraim was in fact invaded by the military forces of Assyria.

In spite of the Lord's harsh chastisements brought about by the Assyrian invasions, approximately one hundred and fifty years later, we find the Prophet Jeremiah issuing the exact same somber warnings to the backslidden leadership of the southern kingdom of Judah which ruled from Jerusalem. After exactly forty years of warning by the Prophet, they too fell under the heavy hand of the Lord's chastisements by way of the Babylonian invasions under King Nebuchadnezzar. In the

years prior to the final invasion -- there were a total of three sieges in all -- which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Jeremiah proclaimed the following to the hard-hearted inhabitants of Jerusalem who had become deceived by their false prophets:

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"  
Jeremiah 5:31, KJV

"Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed."  
Jeremiah 14:14-15, KJV

"Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD."  
Jeremiah 23:32, KJV

"For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD."  
Jeremiah 29:9, KJV

Upon closely examining the Scriptures, we discover that the problem with false prophets is something which persisted at least from the time of Moses, and which continued to plague Jewish society millennia later during the formative years of the Early Christian Church. In fact, Jesus and the Apostles themselves issued warnings regarding this very same problem. Consider the following verses:

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."  
Deuteronomy 18:20-22, KJV

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."  
Matthew 7:15-20, KJV

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Matthew 24:11, 24, KJV

"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."

Mark 13:22, KJV

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

2 Corinthians 11:13-15, KJV

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

2 Timothy 4:3, KJV

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

2 Peter 2:1-2, KJV

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

1 John 4:1, KJV

While some people find Old Testament history boring, and may feel that it is not nearly as important to modern Christians as the things which we learn through our reading of the New Testament, as the Apostles Paul and Jude clearly explain in their Epistles, the truth of the matter is that all of these things were in fact "written for our learning", "written for our admonition", and "set forth for an example", in order that we might learn from the serious mistakes that were made by the rebellious Jews and other peoples of the past. It is for this reason, that while discussing the backslidden state of the Israelites who repeatedly murmured in the wilderness during those forty years, the Apostle Paul admonished his readers to take heed to their mistakes. In similar fashion, Jude advised his readers to take note of the lessons which can be learned from the events that occurred at Sodom and Gomorrha. Consider the following verses:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and

consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:"  
Romans 15:4, KJV

"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they [the ancient children of Israel] also lusted . . . Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."  
1 Corinthians 10:6, 11, KJV

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."  
Jude 1:7, KJV

Thus, one of the important lessons that we can learn from some of these stories and events of the Biblical past, is that we should never become so complacent in our spiritual lives and walk with the Lord, that we rely solely upon the teachings of modern, secular theologians and the oft times self-serving priests and preachers of the modern religious establishment. Why? Because just like the false prophets of old, many of them are politically-correct ear ticklers who only preach what is socially acceptable and popular, for the sake of their own financial profit. More importantly, some of the doctrines they teach are either partially or perhaps even completely wrong and contrary to the Scriptures.

Being as I have written quite extensively regarding this subject in some of my other articles -- such as "Have You Read the New Scriptures Yet?", "Modern False Prophets and Worldly Ecumenism" and "In Defense of the KJV Bible!" -- I will not belabor the point here. However, let me share some key verses with you for your consideration:

"Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."  
Matthew 16:12, KJV

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."  
Acts 20:28-30, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."  
Romans 16:17, KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well

bear with him."  
2 Corinthians 11:3-4, KJV

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."  
Galatians 1:6-9, KJV

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"  
Ephesians 4:14-15, KJV

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."  
Colossians 2:8, KJV

"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."  
1 Timothy 1:3-4, KJV

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;"  
1 Timothy 4:1-2, KJV

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."  
1 Timothy 6:3-5, KJV

"But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."  
Titus 3:9-11, KJV

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."  
Hebrews 13:9, KJV

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

2 John 1:9-11, KJV

It is precisely because of the fact that I am keenly aware of how easy it is to be led astray through erroneous, false, man-made doctrines, and the fact that I have likewise been deceived regarding certain issues in the past, that for many years now I have personally strived to do my best to support my views with as many Scriptures as I possibly can. I do not want my readers to accept something I teach simply because I say so. I want them to believe it because God's Word says so; and because they are convinced that my teachings are fully backed by the Scriptures. I want to place my readers' faith in God's Word, and not just in me. After all, I am human, and I could be wrong. As I point out in the article "Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word", we all need to maintain a certain degree of humility as we endeavor to understand God's Word. This is a quality which is seriously lacking in many modern preachers and Bible teachers.

As the Scriptures clearly inform us, we must each personally invest our time, and diligently labor and study in order to correctly understand God's Word. Furthermore, once we have done so, and once we have become fully convinced in our own minds and hearts by God's Spirit regarding what is true and what is not, we must be willing to stand our ground and contend for the faith. Consider the following verses:

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Psalms 119:11, KJV

"Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Matthew 13:52, KJV

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

John 5:39, KJV

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 6:1-4, KJV

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

1 Timothy 5:17, KJV

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Romans 14:5, KJV

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Jude 1:3, KJV

This is precisely what the Jews of Berea did after Paul and Silas had preached the Word to them in the synagogue. Rather than just blindly accept the Apostles' words as being true, the Berean Jews took upon themselves the task of carefully studying the Scriptures in order to determine if this new doctrine concerning Jesus Christ and the Resurrection from the Dead was really true or not, as we see in the following verses:

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people."

Acts 17:10-13, KJV

Please notice in the previous verses that after the Jews of Berea had confirmed that the words of Paul and Silas were in agreement with the Holy Scriptures, we are informed that many of them accepted Christ into their lives as their Lord and Savior. Thus we see that the preaching of God's Word resulted in faith; and faith resulted in Salvation and new Disciples. Of course, this new fruit being introduced into God's Kingdom also resulted in the next inevitable phase of God's plan; which in this particular case was persecution by the ungodly, unbelieving Jews. That is usually how it goes. In other words, preaching, positive fruit and persecution. The preacher shares the Word and inspires faith; the birth of faith results in new fruit being produced; and the new fruit results in the unbelievers rising up against them. Consider these related verses:

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things . . . So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of

God."  
Romans 10:14-15, 17, KJV

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;  
reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."  
2 Timothy 4:2, KJV

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me,  
and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for  
without me ye can do nothing . . . Ye have not chosen me,  
but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go  
and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:  
that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he  
may give it you."  
John 15:5, 16, KJV

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that  
winneeth souls is wise."  
Proverbs 11:30, KJV

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall  
suffer persecution."  
2 Timothy 3:12, KJV

So you see, I am fully convinced that God's Eternal Word,  
from His Holy Book, written by His inspired writers, is much  
more powerful, much more effective, and certainly much more  
convincing than anything I could ever possibly say or write.  
It inspires faith, it results in Salvation, and it promotes  
spiritual growth for everyone who takes heed to its counsel.  
As the Apostle Paul informs us, God's Word is a sharp sword  
which cuts people to the heart, and convicts their hardened  
spirits. Furthermore, as Jesus also tells us, it is only His  
Words which are Spirit and Life. It is for this same reason  
that we are also told that God has magnified His Word above  
His very Name. Consider the following verses which confirm  
all of these points:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is  
profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for  
instruction in righteousness:"  
2 Timothy 3:16, KJV

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man:  
but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy  
Ghost."  
2 Peter 1:21, KJV

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper  
than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing  
asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,  
and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the  
heart."  
Hebrews 4:12, KJV

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth  
nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit,  
and they are life."  
John 6:63, KJV

". . . for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."  
Psalms 138:2b, KJV



Ironically, despite the Truth and the Life which the Bible offers us, it is these very words which the evil workers of darkness hate the most. How often have we heard such people complain "Why do you always quote from that Book? Why can't you speak with your own words? You Christians are just a bunch of brainwashed parrots. You have no thoughts of your own."; and on and on they go with their silly accusations. They hate the Word; they hate the Truth that it reveals to them; and most of all, they hate the fact that it thoroughly exposes the spiritual darkness and the state of sin in which they have chosen to dwell. God's Word cuts them to the heart, and they do not like it one single bit. Thus, they flee into the darkness in order to try to escape its blinding light and the conviction of God's Spirit. This is why Jesus and the Apostle Paul stated such things as the following:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."  
John 3:19-20, KJV

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."  
2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."  
1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

It becomes evident then that while these rebellious people deceive themselves into believing that their sins remain hidden from the Lord, as I likewise point out in "Beholding the Evil and the Good", the simple truth of the matter is that absolutely nothing is really hidden from God. Not only that, but in due time, every single thing we have ever done will eventually come to light, whether we like it or not, and we will each be judged by the same. Consider also the following related verses:

". . . behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out."  
Numbers 32:23b, KJV

"For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings."  
Job 34:21, KJV

"O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee."  
Psalms 69:5, KJV

"The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."  
Proverbs 15:3, KJV

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed;

neither hid, that shall not be known."  
Luke 12:2, KJV

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."  
John 15:22, KJV

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."  
Hebrews 4:13, KJV

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."  
Romans 14:12, KJV

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."  
2 Corinthians 5:10, KJV

"Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."  
1 Peter 4:4-5, KJV

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."  
Revelation 20:11-13, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

wordweaver777@gmail.com  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

PARABLE OF THE TREE AND THE STORM : PART 2

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Positive Fruit Of God's Word, Parable Of The Sower, God's Purposes Will Be Accomplished, We Are Made Accountable By The Word, Parable Of The Mustard Seed, Tree Ravaged By The Storm, Faith Founded Upon Rock Of God's Word, Stand Fast And Resist Satan's Temptations, Mature Fruit-Bearing Trees, Flexibility,

Life Springs Forth From Death, Jesus Is The Firstfruits Of The Resurrection, We Need To Die Daily To Serve The Lord And Bring Forth Fruit Unto God, God Requires Us To Forsake All, Lightning Fires, Purged In The Fires Of God's Afflictions

As we learned in part one, in contrast to those people who in their foolish pride and stubborn arrogance resist God's Word and try to flee from the Truth that it reveals, if we humbly allow the precious seed of God's Word to be planted in the fertile ground of our receptive hearts, just as the Lord taught in the Gospels, we can grow into strong trees which bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. You may recall that in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus stated the following:

"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold . . . But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."  
Matthew 13:8, 23, KJV

Almost eight hundred years earlier, the Lord inspired the Prophet Isaiah to write the following lines, which perfectly describe how the Seed of God's Word always accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent forth by the Lord:

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."  
Isaiah 55:10-11, KJV

The Prophet Isaiah was not the only individual who the Lord inspired with such wise thoughts. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes -- who many people assume was King David's son, Solomon -- also had this to say:

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."  
Psalms 126:6, KJV

Perhaps not all of the seed will fall on good ground, but in His Wisdom, the Lord knows that it will still accomplish His purpose; because as we learned in part one, by simply hearing the Word of God, whether we choose to receive it or to reject it, we are each made accountable for knowing the truth. In another one of His instructive Parables, which Jesus may have shared with His followers shortly after imparting the Parable of the Sower -- being as they are both found in the very same chapter -- Jesus discusses the issue of faith and the Kingdom of God. In this Parable, He makes the following interesting comparison:

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man

took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

Matthew 13:31-32, KJV

Allow me to share with you an interesting story, which is directly related to this topic of the Seed of God's Word and spiritual growth. Where I live, perhaps fifty feet away from my kitchen window, there was once a large, beautiful, old tree. At the time that I originally authored this article in 1999, I did not know what kind of a tree it was, or even its precise age. However, going by its appearance at that time, I would venture to say that it was more than likely decades old. Whenever I stood there washing the dishes, I always gazed out the window and admired this wonderful creation of the Lord. Its beautiful branches filled with dense green foliage which reached towards the heavens really inspired my heart. Unless one closely examined this tree, he would never even begin to realize how many battles the tree had been through during its long life. He would never even notice the many battle scars which marked its thick trunk as well as most of its elegantly clothed branches.

But you see, I knew; because for many years I watched as that tree endured one severe storm after another. In the aftermath of such powerful events, I also watched as our neighbors had to clean up the fallen leaves, and haul away the broken and destroyed branches which came crashing down to the ground during the height of some of these storms. At times, the wall of rain was so thick, that the tree was not even visible during the daylight hours; even though it was situated only a stone's throw away from my window. In fact, some of these meteorological monsters -- they are called typhoons here -- have been so tremendous, that not only have many homes been heavily damaged or completely destroyed, but there have been a few times when the electricity to my home has been down for up to several weeks following the storm's passage. In fact, on one occasion, it was out for just over one month due to the widespread damage which had been inflicted by one particular storm.

But concerning that majestic, old tree, on many occasions, it was left completely barren of its leaves, so that its bleak, storm-ravaged skeletal structure stood out quite noticeably after such an awesome assault by these tropical visitors. Those leaves which were not blown away, more often than not eventually dried up and fell to the ground, due to the fact that they were severely wind-burned.

Yet, regardless of how many storms it had been through, that wonderful tree endured. It always managed to bounce back to life, and to heal its open scars. Within a few weeks, it was clothed once again in its verdant glory which had been given to it by the Lord, and new branches began to grow in places where others had been violently ripped away by a storm. What was the secret of that tree's endurance? Basically, it was due to two main reasons; both of which have clear spiritual applications to our lives as Christians. The first reason why that majestic tree endured for so many years, is because it was firmly rooted in the rock and soil, thus enabling it to endure the strong winds of adversity. In a similar manner, if

the roots of our faith are firmly anchored in the Rock of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we are obedient to His Holy Word, we will likewise be able to endure the spiritual winds of adversity which may come our way, as we see by the following verses:

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."  
Colossians 2:6-7, KJV

"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock."  
Luke 6:47-48, KJV

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."  
1 Corinthians 10:4, KJV

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."  
1 Corinthians 3:11, KJV

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."  
Psalms 27:5, KJV

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."  
Psalms 40:2, KJV

To reiterate this important point, if our spiritual roots are deeply embedded in God's Word, -- that is, the Bible -- we will likewise be watered and nourished by the spiritual nutrients which it provides. As a result, it will enable us to grow into strong, healthy Christians for the Lord, who will be able to endure, and to stand fast against the subtle temptations and onslaughts of our spiritual adversary; that is, the Devil. Consider the following verses in which the Apostles Peter, Paul and James encourage us to be strong in the Lord, and to stand fast in the faith:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."  
1 Corinthians 15:58, KJV

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."  
1 Corinthians 16:13, KJV

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Galatians 5:1, KJV

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might . . . Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

Ephesians 6:10, 13-17, KJV

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Philippians 1:27, KJV

"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

Philippians 4:1, KJV

"For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 3:8, KJV

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

2 Thessalonians 2:15, KJV

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

2 Timothy 2:1, KJV

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

1 Peter 5:8-9, KJV

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

James 4:7, KJV

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

In the case of the aforementioned tree, because its strong root system enabled it to mature, and not be destroyed by each passing storm, it persevered long enough to become a productive seed-bearing tree, which resulted in the birth of young new trees. In similar fashion, if we persevere in our faith as Christians and don't allow Satan to steal the faith from our hearts -- please see Luke 22:31 -- we can reach an

age of spiritual maturity. When we reach that point, we will also patiently bear fruit for the Lord. Following are a few additional verses -- not mentioned in part one -- which also discuss the topic of bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."  
Psalms 1:3, KJV

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."  
Luke 8:15, KJV

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."  
John 15:1-4, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."  
Romans 7:4, KJV

The second main reason why this grand old tree was able to survive so many years of harsh abuse by these rapists of nature -- that is, the typhoons -- is because God designed it in such a way, that it possessed a degree of flexibility. In other words, similar to vast, golden wheat fields which bend and yield themselves to the roaming prairie winds, the tree was also able to bend in the direction of these mighty tempests, thereby reducing some of the pressure which bore down on its mighty branches. If the tree didn't possess this quality, it would definitely have suffered much more severe damage with each passing storm. It is even quite possible that it would have completely perished many years ago.

As I mentioned earlier, it was rather encouraging to know that even when some of the tree's branches lost their former flexibility due to their old age -- or were still young and too weak to resist the power of one of our tropical storms -- and were thus ripped away during one of such tropical storms, quite often the tree would eventually replace the broken limb with a new one, or even with several new ones. Thus, as Jesus also teaches us in the Gospels, death makes room for new life, as we see by the following verse:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."  
John 12:24, KJV

As you may already know from reading the surrounding verses, it is easily understood that the Lord was referring to His own coming Sacrifice, and how it would result in New Life; not only for Himself, but for the millions of other adopted

children of God who would be born into the Kingdom of Heaven as a result of His obedience to His Father, and His Atonement for our sins. It is precisely for this reason, that following a spiritual parallel to the Jewish Feast of Firstfruits, in the Scriptures Jesus is referred to as the Firstfruits of the Resurrection. I discuss this same subject in more detail in articles such as "The Lamb of God Was a Goat", "The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men", "Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?", and "Are You Saved and Sealed and Healed and Filled?". Consider the following verses where Jesus is called the firstfruits, the firstborn, and the first begotten of the dead:

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body . . . For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."  
Romans 8:22-23, 29, KJV

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."  
1 Corinthians 15:19-23, KJV

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature . . . And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."  
Colossians 1:12-15, 18, KJV

"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,"  
Hebrews 12:23, KJV

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."  
James 1:18, KJV

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"  
Revelation 1:5, KJV

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men,



being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."  
Revelation 14:4, KJV

Along the same lines, as I amply discuss in articles such as "Are You Crucified With Christ?", the New Testament likewise informs us that as servants of Jesus Christ, we Christians are obligated to die to ourselves, and to our own desires in this present life on a daily basis, in order to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. We must forsake all. This Scriptural truth is made quite evident by powerful verses such as the following:

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."  
Luke 9:23-24, KJV

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."  
Romans 6:6, KJV

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."  
Romans 12:1-2, KJV

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."  
1 Corinthians 15:31, KJV

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."  
Galatians 2:20, KJV

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."  
Galatians 6:14, KJV

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."  
1 John 3:16, KJV

Sadly, many people -- including many Christians -- are very hesitant to do this. They simply do not want to die daily in order to truly serve the Lord. They want to hang on to their old life in this wicked world, including their family, their friends, their job in the world which perhaps pays them good money, their expensive house, their fancy car, their pets, and other secular things which stand in their way of serving the Lord. They are prisoners of their own materialism. Jesus warned us of these traps which prevent us from serving Him with our whole hearts in verses such as the following:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also . . . No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."  
Matthew 6:19-21, 24, KJV

"And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."  
Matthew 8:19-22, KJV

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."  
Matthew 10:34-38, KJV

"Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."  
Matthew 12:47-50, KJV

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."  
Matthew 19:29, KJV

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."  
Mark 10:29-30, KJV

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury

their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:57-62, KJV

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26-33, KJV

So as you can plainly see, just as Jesus was willing to die to Himself and to His own desires as a human being, and to ultimately offer His very own life as a propitiation for our sins, we too must be willing to forsake all, and to die to ourselves on a daily basis, in order to bring forth fruit for the Kingdom of God. We must be like the corn [grain] of wheat which falls into the ground and dies, so that new life may spring forth from the same; new life in Jesus Christ.

Returning to our story regarding the tree and the storm, in reality, the fact that the tree loses some of its branches due to the strong tropical winds is a form of natural purge. It is similar to the lightning fires which often burn many acres of grasslands and forests. While such events appear to be tragedies, the truth is that they really clear the older, thicker vegetation, and make room for young new saplings and other plant life. Furthermore, what is burned away eventually is converted into new fertile soil. In a spiritual sense, the Scriptures also teach us that sometimes it becomes necessary for the Lord to purge His beloved children of their dross and impurities as well, in order that they might bear more fruit for His Kingdom. This has been the case throughout Biblical history, as we see by the following verses:

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10, KJV

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." Zechariah 13:9, KJV

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers

temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."  
James 1:2-4, KJV

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"  
1 Peter 1:7, KJV

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."  
1 Peter 4:12-14, KJV

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."  
Revelation 3:18, KJV

Please go to part three for the continuation of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

wordweaver777@gmail.com  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

PARABLE OF THE TREE AND THE STORM : PART 3

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Purges And Chastisements Equal More Fruit, God's Desire Is To Heal And Not To Destroy, Spring Back To Life, Comforting Our Brethren, Light At The End Of The Tunnel, God's Mercy, Peace With God Through Jesus Christ, There Is Healing In His Wings, Spiritual Flexibility, Maintain Childlike Faith, Treasures Of God's Word, New Wine Must Be Put In New Bottles, Importance Of Remaining Sensitive To The Voice Of God's Holy Spirit

As I concluded in part two, due to our sinful and sometimes rebellious nature, Divine Chastisement is a necessary part of our Christian growth process. While we may not like the Lord dealing in our lives, and while it may not make us feel very good to be the object of His fiery purges, and may even hurt our pride, the Lord certainly knows what is best for us and for His Kingdom. Where the real danger lies, is when we

become such unfruitful branches, that the Lord decides that it is no longer worthwhile to purge us. Instead, He chooses to cast us away. Better it is to be purged and purified in the fires of Divine Chastisement, so that we will bear more fruit for the Kingdom of God. Allow me to share with you a few more verses regarding this topic:

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

John 15:1, 6, KJV

"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Luke 13:6-9, KJV

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

1 Corinthians 3:14-15, KJV

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Hebrews 12:5-13, KJV

"Open rebuke is better than secret love."

Proverbs 27:5, KJV

So clearly then, the purpose of Divine Chastisement is not to discourage us or to destroy us. Rather, it is to bring us to a point of repentance, and to purify us, in order that we might become more fruitful branches for God's Kingdom. Divine Chastisements are acts of Divine Love, and not demonstrations

of God's hate as some worldly people seem to think who do not understand the ways of the Lord. In fact, we find a number of other verses in the Bible which clearly reveal that God does not wish to cast us off, or to destroy us. As we have seen, His clear desire is that we repent and be healed of our sin and rebellion. Consider the following Scriptural evidence:

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"  
Ezekiel 33:11, KJV

"For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."  
Lamentations 3:31-33, KJV

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."  
Matthew 18:10-14, KJV

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."  
Luke 9:51-56, KJV

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."  
Luke 19:10, KJV

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."  
2 Peter 3:9, KJV

If you possess an interest in learning more about the Lord's loving chastisements, allow me to suggest that you consider reading such articles as "Are Personal Tragedies Due to Sin?", "Love, Mercy Forgiveness and Chastisement" and "Beholding the Evil and the Good".

As I mentioned in part two, while some branches may have been violently ripped from that majestic old tree during one of our severe storms, sooner or later, new branches eventually grew to replace those which had been lost. In spite of the powerful force of nature which battered it year after year, that tree was never completely destroyed. It always sprang back with a new burst of verdant life. It just could not be defeated. In similar fashion, after we Christians experience certain trials in our lives, in which God may have found it necessary to prune a few of our branches, we too can spring back to life if we maintain our focus on the Lord. Not only that, but having gone through our own battles, we can then offer words of encouragement, comfort and support to other brethren who may be experiencing trials similar to our own. Consider the following verses:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."  
2 Corinthians 1:3-4, KJV

Sometimes, just letting a person know that there is light at the end of the tunnel, that there is definitely a way out of the trial, and that there is a sure victory to be had, will give them the faith that they need in order to weather the storm, and to persevere to the end. While God may be forced to afflict us on occasion in order to straighten us out, as we saw earlier, He is also a merciful God who understands our weak frame, and that we are just dust. As a result, His ultimate goal is not to destroy us. Rather, it is to bring about an attitude of repentance which will lead to healing. Following are some additional verses which reveal His great Mercy:

"And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not."  
Nehemiah 9:17, KJV

"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."  
Psalms 103:8-18, KJV

"The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."  
Psalms 145:8, KJV

"In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer."  
Isaiah 54:8, KJV

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."  
Lamentations 3:22-23, KJV

"The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."  
Nahum 1:3, KJV

"And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."  
Jonah 4:2, KJV

"And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."  
Joel 2:13, KJV

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."  
John 6:37, KJV

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."  
Ephesians 4:32, KJV

". . . for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."  
Hebrews 13:5b, KJV

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."  
1 Peter 5:7, KJV

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."  
1 John 1:9, KJV

To reiterate, as a result of God's great Love and Mercy, there is always both spiritual and physical healing in His wings for those who sincerely cry out to Him in repentance. Of course, the most important part of the healing process is to have a restored relationship with our Heavenly Father. As you may know, this is in fact the primary reason why Jesus came to the Earth in the first place. His main objective was to restore a peaceful relationship between God the Father and His children on the Earth. This He did when He offered up Himself as the Perfect Sacrifice for our transgressions. This truth regarding peace with the Father is made evident



by verses such as the following:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."  
John 14:27, KJV

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."  
John 16:33, KJV

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"  
Romans 5:1, KJV

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."  
Ephesians 2:13-18, KJV

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."  
Philippians 4:7, KJV

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:"  
Colossians 1:19-22, KJV

While spiritual healing was obviously the most important aspect of Christ's mission to the Earth, a side benefit is that physical healing has also become available to us as well, if we believe. Following are some additional verses for your encouragement and thoughtful consideration. Please note that due to the fact that there are so many verses in the Scriptures regarding the topic of healing, I am not able to include them all here. However, these should suffice:

"So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children."  
Genesis 20:17, KJV

"And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee."

Exodus 15:26, KJV

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."  
Deuteronomy 32:39, KJV

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."  
2 Chronicles 7:14, KJV

"And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people."  
2 Chronicles 30:20, KJV

"And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake."  
2 Kings 2:21-22, KJV

"Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD."  
2 Kings 20:5, KJV

"O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me."  
Psalms 30:2, KJV

"He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."  
Psalms 107:20, KJV

"And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them."  
Isaiah 19:22, KJV

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."  
Isaiah 53:5, KJV

"I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him."  
Isaiah 57:18-19, KJV

"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God."  
Jeremiah 3:22, KJV

"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after."

Jeremiah 30:17, KJV

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."

Hosea 6:1, KJV

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him."

Hosea 14:4, KJV

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."

Malachi 4:2, KJV

"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed . . . And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him . . . And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

Matthew 8:3, 7, 13, KJV

"So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."

Matthew 20:34, KJV

"And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them . . . And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."

Mark 1:31, 42, KJV

"And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."

Mark 2:12, KJV

"And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment."

Mark 5:42, KJV

"And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."

Mark 7:35, KJV

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

Mark 10:52, KJV

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,"

Luke 4:18, KJV

"Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and

immediately her issue of blood stanch'd . . . And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."  
Luke 8:44, 47, KJV

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."  
Acts 3:7, KJV

"And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."  
Acts 9:34, KJV

"And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."  
Acts 13:11, KJV

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."  
Hebrews 12:12-13, KJV

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."  
1 Peter 2:24, KJV

But what about the times when God chooses not to heal? How should we react to this possibility? For those of you who may be interested in learning more about this topic, I discuss this issue in the article entitled "Why Doesn't God Heal Me?".

As I explained in part two, one of the reasons why that tree was able to endure so many violent storms, is due to the fact that, similar to those fields of wheat which are blown by the prairie winds, it possessed a certain degree of flexibility in its branches. It is interesting to note that the younger tree branches are, the more tender and flexible they tend to be. In similar fashion, we Christians must likewise possess a certain degree of spiritual flexibility in our lives. While our faith must certainly grow and become strong, as I point out in the article entitled "The Faith of a Little Child", it must also remain childlike in nature. Consider the following story that is found in the Gospel of Luke:

"And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."  
Luke 18:15-17, KJV

This childlike flexibility in our faith is rather important when it concerns our desire to understand God's Word. If we

don't possess this quality; if we behave as if we already know it all; or if we are so bound and blinded by the false doctrines and traditions of men, so that we resist the truth that God may be trying to reveal to us; we too may become spiritually damaged, and our spiritual growth may become stunted. In short, as I mentioned in part one, we all need to maintain an attitude of humility as we endeavor to grasp the meaning of the Scriptures. If we don't do this, we may become just like those dry, brittle, old branches which are so rigid, that they easily snap off when the strong winds of adversity and persecution begin to buffet the tree. If this is the case in your life, allow me to remind you that it is those dry, brittle, fruitless branches which make the best firewood, as we saw earlier in this series.

So the lesson is clear. We must remain spiritually receptive to treasures both new and old which can be mined from the "treasure chest" of God's Word, because they are much better than silver and gold. Furthermore, it is important that we remain flexible, new bottles which can hold the new wine of the Spirit. Consider the following verses which support these various points:

". . . Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Matthew 13:52b, KJV

"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Psalms 119:72, KJV

"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

Psalms 19:9-10, KJV

"And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved."

Luke 5:37-38, KJV

To reiterate this point, it is very important that we each remain flexible, sensitive and receptive to the wind -- that is, to the Voice of God's Holy Spirit -- which instructs us in wisdom, knowledge and the way of righteousness. We must listen attentively to the things which the Lord is trying to teach us from His Word. We know that He will indeed teach us if we are listening; because as Jesus Himself promised His followers in the following verses:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14:26, KJV

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself;

but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

John 16:13, KJV

Please go to part four for the conclusion of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

wordweaver777@gmail.com

<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

PARABLE OF THE TREE AND THE STORM : PART 4

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Sensitive To The Wind Of The Holy Spirit, Beware Of The Winds Of False Doctrine, God Tells Prophet Jeremiah To Tear Down The Lies And Deceptions, Murderers Of God's Holy Prophets, First Century Compromise With Rome, Lies And Deceptions, The Devil's Various Titles, John The Baptist Resisted The Lies, Modern False Prophets, Parable Of The Tares, Evil Tree And Evil Fruit, Chaff Of The Wicked, Questions For My Christian Brethren, Symbolic Trees Planted By The River Of The Water Of Life, Information Concerning Rain Trees, Sad Fate Of My Rain Tree, Closing Remarks, Suggested Reading Resources List

As I concluded in part three, it is important that we each remain flexible, sensitive and receptive to the Voice of God's Holy Spirit, because it is the Spirit which instructs us in wisdom, knowledge and the way of righteousness by way of God's eternal Word. However, at the same time, while we should be flexible reeds of wheat who bend to the Wind of God's Will, and flexible branches which yield the fruits of the Spirit, as we learned in part one, it is also possible to become overly flexible; so much so, that we actually become politically-correct menpleasers who compromise the doctrinal purity of our faith, by embracing doctrines and ideas which are clearly in conflict with the written Word.

It may interest you to know that it is for this very reason that when God called Jeremiah to be His Prophet to the land of Israel, He specifically informed Jeremiah that before he could plant the truth in the hearts of his countrymen, he had to first root out and pull down the lies and the false doctrines which had been planted by the false priests and prophets of that ancient era. Consider this verse as proof:

"See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."  
Jeremiah 1:10, KJV

Tragically, as I explain in articles such as "Revelation's

Babylon the Great", the Jewish leadership did not want to have anything to do with the Lord's fiery Prophets, and the uncomfortable truths which they revealed. In fact, those treacherous snakes eventually succeeded in shutting up the mouths of God's true Prophets through severe persecution, as well as by death. Jesus Himself exposed their murderous ways with these words that are found in the Gospel of Matthew:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."  
Matthew 23:29-39, KJV

Thus, as we learned in part one, this same false, deceptive, lethargic spirit existed during the time of Christ several hundred years later; and was being promoted by the corrupt Jewish leaders who sought to preserve their power and the status quo, through their sickening compromise with their Roman conquerors. Such was the case with Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, as well as with the Herodian dynasty. Precisely as Jesus and the Apostles warned the young Church, these false shepherds and teachers taught a watered-down version of the truth that was replete with lies and deceptions. The people who swallowed their lies were simply weak reeds who were blown over by their wind of false doctrines. Clearly, they were not strong, fruitful trees for the Lord.

Of course, the evil force behind that deceptive wind which blew during much of the First Century was none other than Satan himself, who Jesus called the "father of lies"; who the Apostle Paul referred to as the "prince of the power of the air", the "god of this world", "spiritual wickedness in high places", and a false "angel of light"; and who John described as "the dragon", "that old serpent" and "the accuser of our brethren", as we can determine by the following verses:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."  
John 8:44, KJV

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

2 Corinthians 11:14, KJV

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"

Ephesians 2:2, KJV

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Ephesians 6:12, KJV

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

Revelation 12:9-10, KJV

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,"

Revelation 20:2, KJV

Of course, as we also know from the Scriptures, there was one strong reed of wheat who did not so easily bend to the deceptive winds of false doctrine which were so prevalent at that time; and it is for this very reason that he eventually lost his head. Instead, the Gospels inform us that this man stood out as "a burning and a shining light" who called the people of Israel to repentance in the years leading up to the revelation of Jesus Christ. This man, John the Baptist, stood out from his peers, as one who told the naked truth, instead of bowing to the sickening political correctness and the doctrines of devils which were espoused by the blind, legalistic religionists in Jerusalem. Jesus Himself said the following concerning John:

". . . What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."



Luke 7:24b-28, KJV

"Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

John 5:33-36, KJV

So as you can see, John the Baptist was not a reed shaken by the winds of false doctrine and political correctness. John was not a sickening manpleaser like all of the rest of them. He was willing to stand firmly for the truth to the very end of his ministry. He was willing to stand firmly against the strong winds of adversity; because like the righteous tree we discussed earlier, John was firmly anchored in the true Word of God. John was clearly listening to the right Wind, to the right Voice, and to the right Spirit, and not to the false one being promoted by the Jewish religionists and the false prophets who tickled people's ears.

Sadly, as I briefly mentioned in part one, the situation has not changed. Not only has modern Judaism continued down the destructive road to hell, but as I explain in articles such as "Elijah: Where Are the True Prophets of God?", "Modern False Prophets and Worldly Ecumenism", and "Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon", Christianity has also become filled with many false prophets and deceptive teachers, who tickle the ears of their followers for profit. These people are not true wheat; they are tares. They may act and appear like wheat, but they are not. While they may be currently growing amongst the true wheat, someday the Lord will pluck them out by the root, and cast them into the fire, as we see in the following Parable:

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn . . . He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world."

Matthew 13:24-30, 37b-40, KJV

In another Parable, Jesus also informs us that these wicked

deceivers are evil trees which bring forth evil fruit, and that someday they will be cut down and cast into the fires of God's righteous judgments, as we see by these verses:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."  
Matthew 7:15-20, KJV

In yet other places throughout the Scriptures, we are told that the wicked are similar to the useless chaff which will be blown away by the winds of God's chastisements. Consider the following verses:

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."  
Psalms 1:4-6, KJV

"How oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away."  
Job 21:17-18, KJV

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."  
Daniel 2:35, KJV

"But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."  
Matthew 15:13, KJV

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."  
Matthew 3:11-12, KJV

So as you can clearly see, in quite a few places throughout the Bible, the Lord compares the wicked unbelievers -- and even those people who feign to be our Christian brethren -- to fruitless trees, to useless tares, and to empty chaff which will all eventually be destroyed. This is a sobering thought indeed.

What about you, my friend? Are you a healthy tree which is

firmly rooted in the fertile ground of God's Word? Are you a truly submissive tree which knows how to bend to the Wind and Will of His Spirit? Are your branches fruitful branches which are bearing new souls for the Kingdom of God? Do you allow Him to prune your branches occasionally, so that you will become an even more fruitful tree? If so, then you will surely have your place in God's glorious Kingdom sometime in the future. As the Psalmist and the Apostle Paul wrote:

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."  
Psalms 37:4, KJV

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."  
1 Corinthians 2:9, KJV

In fact, symbolically-speaking, you just may be a tree that is planted by the River of the Water of Life within the very Golden City itself. Compare closely the following verses. The similarities are truly amazing. Please notice how both verses mention a tree, a river, fruit being produced each month, and leaves of a special nature. God's Word is truly profound:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."  
Psalms 1:3, KJV

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."  
Revelation 22:1-2, KJV

If you are interested in reading more about the possible symbolism behind John's description of the Heavenly City, please refer to such articles as "The Born-Again Experience: Now or Later?".

Before concluding this series, I would like to return your attention to the tree which actually inspired me to write this series. You may have noticed that in talking about it, I wrote in the past tense. As I will now explain to you, the reason why I did this is because the tree no longer exists; at least not in the form in which I knew it fourteen years ago when I first wrote this article.

You may recall that in part two I mentioned that back in 1999 I did not know what kind of tree it was. However, as I began this update fourteen years later, I conducted a bit of online research in order to answer this question. I arrived at the conclusion that this pair of majestic, towering trees which I have admired for so many years are known by the scientific name of "Albizia saman", or by the obsolete name of "Samanea saman". In our English language they are commonly referred to as rain trees, monkeypod trees, cow tamarind, saman tree, or zaman. In the local dialect, this tree is called "tronkon mames". The rain tree is indigenous to the northern part of

South America and the Caribbean Islands. However, over the centuries it has spread to many other regions of the world, including Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. There is a similar species called Acacia which is quite plenteous in Australia and elsewhere.

These beautiful rain trees typically live for eighty to one hundred years, and can easily grow to a height of fifty to eighty feet. Going by this information alone, I believe that the two trees which are behind my home are quite old, being as they are very large. Rain trees are easily recognizable due to the fact that their branches spread out widely like an umbrella to form a very large canopy. As occurs with the two trees in my neighborhood, the branches of the rain tree are typically covered with tropical ferns, orchids and related plants.

Tragically, the tree which I describe in this article is now quite dead. While you may possibly assume that its demise was the result of a tropical storm -- or typhoon -- let me inform you that this is not the case. In fact, this magnificent tree was purposely destroyed a number of years ago by man. To be more specific, some of my neighbors chose to destroy the tree because each time that a major typhoon would pass through our area, the electrical wires to some of the nearby homes would be snapped due to the swaying branches. With my view from the kitchen window, I observed that their solution seemed to be to start burning trash underneath the tree near the trunk, so that their actions eventually killed this majestic creation of the Lord. My neighbors may have thought that their manner of execution was subtle, but from my unknown vantage point, I knew full well what was going on with that dear tree which had inspired me with its verdant beauty for so many years.

Once the tree started dying, and its branches began to dry up over the ensuing months, the neighbors began to saw off the branches little by little. Now, years later, this once majestic tree is a horrible, sad-looking trunk with a few sawed-off, fern-covered thick branches jutting from it, and it has completely lost all of its former glory. It used to look very much like its twin which grows perhaps fifty feet away, but now it looks like the image I have included here. The picture on the left was taken in July of 2012, while the image on the right is the sister tree which still exists at this current time.

[insert rain tree images here]

While I truly miss seeing that grand old tree as I gaze out of my kitchen window, I am thankful that its beautiful twin has not met a similar fate, and probably never will due to its safe location away from electrical wires. Thus is my tale of the parable of the tree and the storm. It is my hope that you have found it informative and enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with either Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would really appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thank you so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in

this series, or which are related to this series, and which are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server.

Are Personal Tragedies Due to Sin?  
Are You Crucified With Christ?  
Are You Saved and Sealed and Healed and Filled?  
Beholding the Evil and the Good  
Elijah: Where Are the True Prophets of God?  
Have You Read the New Scriptures Yet?  
Have You Sold Your Soul for a Pound of Flesh?  
Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word  
In Defense of the KJV Bible!  
Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?  
Love, Mercy Forgiveness and Chastisement  
Modern False Prophets and Worldly Ecumenism  
Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon  
Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service  
Revelation's Babylon the Great  
Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God  
The Battle is Not Yours Alone!  
The Born-Again Experience: Now or Later?  
The Children of God and Politics  
The Faith of a Little Child  
The Fruits of Disobedience  
The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men  
The Lamb of God Was a Goat  
The Lord Will Lift You Up  
Why Doesn't God Heal Me?

Written by the WordWeaver

wordweaver777@gmail.com  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>