

WHAT WAS HE WRITING?

TWICE IN TODAY'S READING **JESUS WROTE SOMETHING IN THE DIRT**. IT IS A DEBATE AMONG SCHOLARS AS TO THE WORDS JESUS WROTE, ONLY GUESSING IN THE LIGHT OF THE SITUATION. HOWEVER, **THERE WERE TIMES WHEN GOD "WROTE" WORDS TO US AND THERE IS NO DOUBT WHAT THEY WERE AND THE REASON HE WROTE AND GAVE THEM TO US.**

THE FIRST TIME WAS WHEN GOD WROTE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ON THE STONE TABLETS REVEALING HIS HOLINESS AND BASIC RULES TO LIVE BY TO HIS PEOPLE. IN EXODUS 32:16 IT IS WRITTEN *"And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables."*

THE NEXT TIME WE CAN SEE GOD'S PATIENCE WHEN WE STUMBLE AND FALL, YET WILL NOT ABANDON US! MOSES IN ANGER HAD DESTROYED THE TABLETS AND GOD INSTRUCTS MOSES IN DEUTERONOMY 10:1-4 Moses speaks saying: *"At that time the Lord said to me, 'Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.' "So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. And He wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the Ten Commandments which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me."*

A THIRD TIME GOD'S JUDGMENT AND JUSTICE WERE REVEALED IN HIS WRITING ON BALSHAZZAR'S PALACE WALL, WHEN HE OFFENDED GOD. THEN DANIEL INTERPRETED THE SAYING ON THE PALACE WALL FOR BALSHAZZAR, THE SON OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR, AND CURRENT KING AS TO THE FATE OF HIS KINGDOM AND HIMSELF – BOTH TO BE LOST.

WHETHER IT WAS IN THE WRITING JESUS DID IN THE DIRT OR NOT, THERE WAS IN WORDS AND ACTIONS OF GOD THROUGH JESUS COMPASSION AND FORGIVENESS.

AS WE LOOK AT THIS STORY WHERE ARE YOU? WHOSE "SIDE" WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN ON? WHAT ACTION, IF ANY, WOULD YOU HAVE TAKEN?

*WOULD YOU HAVE PICKED UP A STONE?
WOULD YOU HAVE SPOKE UP AS JESUS DID AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DAY?*

OF COURSE, IT IS EASY TO LOOK BACK AND SAY WHAT WE WOULD HAVE DONE. OF COURSE NONE OF US WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE A PHARISEE TRYING TO TRAP JESUS IN HIS OWN WORDS OR HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF THE CROWD WHO READILY PICKED UP A STONE. ANY HEAVEN FORBID, NONE OF US WOULD HAVE BEEN THE ADULTERESS COMMITTING SIN!!! OR **MAYBE IF WE ARE QUITE HONEST WITH OURSELVES WE MIGHT ADMIT THAT THERE JUST MIGHT BE A TRACE OF EACH OF THEM IN US.**

AT TIMES **WE MAY BE A MEMBER OF THE CROWD** READY TO “PICK UP THE STONE” AND CAST IT AT THE INSISTENCE OF OTHERS. **WE MAY HAVE BEEN THE PHARISEES WILLING TO DEFEND OUR WAY OF DOING THINGS**, OUR TRADITION AT THE COST OF RUINING OTHERS, AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM. **COULD WE POSSIBLY BE THE ADULTERESS?** NOW MOST ALL OF US WOULD BE THINKING IN OUR MINDS OF ADULTERY AS BEING SEXUAL, BUT THE ROOT OF THE WORD ACTUALLY COMES FROM UNFAITHFULNESS. **OR AS A DISCIPLE, WHICH IS A FOLLOWER OF ONE'S TEACHINGS, COULD WE BE LIKE JESUS?**

LABELS REALLY DON'T MEAN MUCH UNLESS BY ACTIONS WE CONFIRM THOSE LABELS. **DO YOUR ACTIONS AND YOUR WORDS THAT GO ALONG WITH THOSE ACTIONS FALL INTO ONE OF THESE GROUPS OF PEOPLE WE SEE IN THIS STORY TODAY?** I'LL ANSWER THAT QUESTION. IF WE ARE TRULY HONEST WITH OURSELVES IT MIGHT EVEN BE THE ANSWER “ALL OF THE ABOVE”!!!!

DOES THAT ANSWER MAKE US A BAD PERSON? NO!!! BUT IF WE ARE GOING TO GROW SPIRITUALLY AND BECOME MORE CHRIST-LIKE THEN WE HAD BETTER TAKE A LOOK AT OURSELVES AND ADMIT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE STUMBLE AND ACT LIKE A PHARISEE, ONE OF THE CROWD, OR EVEN THE ADULTERESS, BUT BY THE GRACE GOD AND HIS FORGIVENESS AND LOVE THERE ARE MANY TIMES THAT WE DO ACT CHRIST-LIKE REACHING OUT TO THOSE AROUND US.

THANK GOD AND ISN'T THAT WHY WE ARE HERE THIS MORNING? **DURING OUR WORSHIP WE ARE PRAISING GOD AND THANKING HIM FOR BRINGING US THROUGH THE WEEK.** EVEN IF WE HAD A ROUGH ONE AND THINGS DIDN'T GO AT ALL THE WAY WE EXPECTED, **WE ARE HERE! WE MADE IT!!!** HERE TOGETHER TO PRAISE GOD. NOT TO SIT HERE LIKE A BUMP ON A LOG. **GOD IS WAITING TO HEAR YOUR VOICE AND YOUR HEART WITH PRAISE AND GRATITUDE.** THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES WE WILL BE HERE NEXT WEEK, IN FACT THERE IS NO GUARANTEE WE'LL SEE IT TO THE END OF THIS DAY. THAT IS EXACTLY WHY WE MUST SEIZE THE MOMENT AND MAKE THE MOST OF IT, WHETHER IT IS WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, FRIENDS, FAMILY OR AN OPPORTUNITY.

LETS TAKE AN OPPORTUNITY THIS MORNING TO LEARN FROM WORDS INSPIRED BY GOD THAT MEN WROTE SO WE CAN KNOW WITHOUT A DOUBT HOW TO LIVE OUR LIVES.

NOW IT WAS EARLY IN THE MORNING AND HERE COMES THE PHARISEES WANTING TO “TEST” JESUS, WHICH REALLY MEANT THEY WERE OUT TO TRAP HIM IN HIS OWN WORDS. TO TURN HIS OWN WORDS BACK ON HIM AND BE ABLE TO CHARGE HIM WITH SOMETHING. **DO WE FIND OURSELVES GOING ON THE “ATTACK” TO GET A “DIG” IN BECAUSE OF SOMETHING SOMEONE MAY HAVE DONE WRONG? DO WE GOSSIP AGAINST SOMEONE LIKE THE PHARISEES WERE DOING WITH THE SO CALLED ADULTERESS?** THEY ARE SOME COMMENTARIES THAT SAY THE PHARISEES JUST GRABBED THIS WOMAN IN ORDER TO USE HER, TO TRAP JESUS. NO ONE WOULD DARE SPEAK UP FOR HER UNLESS YOU WANTED THE WHOLE WRATH OF THE PHARISEES TO COME DOWN ON YOU.

DON'T BELIEVE FOR A MINUTE THAT THIS STILL DOES NOT HAPPEN IN CHURCHES TODAY. PEOPLE IN POSITIONS OF POWER, WHERE THEY SHOULD BE USING THERE POWERS TO SERVE OTHERS NOT THEM SELVES SPEAK ABOUT PEOPLE IN SUCH A WAY THAT OTHERS, WHO WILL NOT STAND UP TO THIS GOSSIP, LET IT GO AND MAY EVEN SPREAD IT FURTHER,

AND PEOPLE BEGIN TO SAY “FROM WHAT I HEARD, I DON'T WANT THAT PERSON ON MY COMMITTEE.” OR “I DON'T WANT TO SERVE WITH HER OR HIM”, AND I HAVE SEEN IT HAPPEN HERE!

NOW IF THE GOOD LORD IS MAKING YOU FEEL A BIT UNCOMFORTABLE RIGHT NOW, GOOD, BECAUSE WE CAN NOT BE THE CHURCH HE DESIRES US TO BE IF WE DON'T FACE OUR SHORTCOMINGS AND ASK FORGIVENESS, LIVE IN HIS GRACE AND WANT PEOPLE TO COME TO CENTENNIAL. AS WE CONSIDER EXPANSION, I HAVE HEARD, MY WORDS, WE HAVE THIS LITTLE CHURCH AND ONE BIG FAMILY. THAT IS GREAT, BUT IF WE THINK SO MUCH OF OUR FAMILY THEN WE SHOULD BE EAGER TO BRING OTHERS INTO IT AND MAKE THEM “FEEL AT HOME”.

JESUS DEBATED, HE BATTLED, OR WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT, TO CHANGE THE THINKING OF HIS DAY. THE PHARISEES HAD TURNED FAITH INTO RULES AND MORE RULES. JESUS MOURNED OVER WHAT FAITH HAD BECOME.

IT MUST BE FIRST AND FOREMOST ABOUT PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS – NOT RULES, NOT THINGS, NOT BUILDINGS!!! IF WE HAVE TO GIVE UP SOME OF OUR PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS, SWALLOW SOME PRIDE THAN SO BE IT. IF IT MEANS WE IMPROVE AND PRESERVE RELATIONSHIPS. THAT IS WHY GOD SMILES, WHEN HIS PEOPLE LIVE THAT WAY.

WE TALKED IN OUR LAST BIBLE STUDY ON WEDNESDAY ABOUT UNITY IN CHURCH. WE TALKED ABOUT WHO IT WAS WE FIND MOST DIFFICULT TO GET ALONG WITH, TO UNDERSTAND, TO COMMUNICATE WITH, AND TO LOVE!! NEWSFLASH – GOD PUTS THOSE VERY PEOPLE IN OUR LIFE SO WE CAN GROW. AVOIDING THEM? AT THE EXPENSE OF OUR OWN GROWTH!! **AND IF WE ARE NOT GROWING THEN WE SOON BECOME STAGNANT AND THEN WE BEGIN TO SLIDE BACKWARDS.**

A QUESTION – DO YOU TAKE TIME TO READ THE BIBLE? DO YOU STUDY THE BIBLE? DO YOU CONSIDER MEETING WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS OTHER THAN ON SUNDAY MORNING IN ORDER TO GROW? DO YOU REMEMBER IN SUNDAY SCHOOL THAT EAGERNESS, THAT ENTHUSIASM YOU HAD ON SUNDAY MORNING THAT YOU COULDN'T WAIT TO GET TO CHURCH AND GO TO SUNDAY SCHOOL? WHERE DID IT GO? THE ANSWER MAY BE “I DON'T HAVE TIME”, WORD IT THIS WAY -“I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR _____” BECAUSE “_____ ISN'T A PRIORITY RIGHT NOW”

IT IS AMAZING HOW MUCH IMPACT THAT SIMPLE RE-FRAMING OF THOUGHT CAN HAVE. IT CAN HELP CLARIFY THINGS THAT ARE NOT IN FACT PRIORITIES AT THE MOMENT TO BECOME A PRIORITY IN OUR LIFE.

DO WE FIND THAT FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER WE CAN “GO ALONG WITH THE CROWD”? NOT UNLIKE THAT DAY, THE PHARISEES BROUGHT THE WOMAN TO JESUS. YOUNG PEOPLE FOR YOU TODAY THEY ARE MANY MORE THINGS YOU ARE PRESSURED TO GO ALONG WITH THAN MANY OF US FACED IN OUR YOUTH. IT IS MUCH EASIER TO GO ALONG, BUT IN THE LONG RUN THAT CAN SADLY BECOME A WAY OF LIFE.

IN THIS STORY THERE IS NOT ONE VERSE THAT CONTAINS ANY WORDS FROM THE CROWD, ONLY THAT THEY WERE READY TO PICK UP A STONE. EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, ALL LEFT

WITHOUT A WORD AND STONES WERE LEFT ON THE GROUND. **HOW MANY “STONES” ARE WE READY TO THROW WHEN WE ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO JUDGE AS WE HAVE BEEN SHOWN GRACE WHEN WE WERE AS GUILTY AS PEOPLE THOUGHT THE WOMAN WAS?**

WHETHER THAT “STONE” IS CALLED GOSSIP, A LIE, JUDGMENT, A HARSH WORD, WE MUST LAY DOWN THOSE STONES! JESUS NEVER PICKED UP A STONE IN THIS STORY AND AS HIS FOLLOWERS, HIS DISCIPLES WE MUST NOT DO ANY LESS IN OUR LIVES WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES IN SUCH SITUATIONS. WE CAN AND MUST MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE!!!

IN THIS STORY JESUS TWICE WRITES IN THE GROUND. AS I SAID EARLIER, SCHOLARS HAVE SPECULATED BUT NO ONE REALLY KNOWS WHAT HE WROTE. **WHAT IS IMPORTANT HERE IS WHAT HIS ACTION ALLOWED. FIRST IT ALLOWED THE PHARISEES, THE CROWD AND EVEN THE ADULTERESS TO REFLECT. IT WAS LIKE JESUS WAS GIVING THE PHARISEES A CHANCE TO QUIT WHILE THEY WERE AHEAD. OF COURSE IT GAVE ALL THREE GROUPS TIME TO RESPOND. THEIR SILENCE WAS REALLY A RESPONSE OR A LACK OF A RESPONSE, TO JESUS' WORDS “WHO IS WITHOUT SIN CAST THE FIRST STONE”.**

HERE WAS A CHANCE FOR ALL TO REPENT, BUT AGAIN NOT A WORD. DO WE WHEN HAVE A CHANCE TO REPENT SAYING I AM TRULY SORRY, TURN AND WALK AWAY? FINALLY WHEN THE ONLY ONE LEFT IS THE WOMAN JESUS TELLS HER THERE IS NO ONE TO CONDEMN HER, NOT EVEN HIM AND TO GO AND SIN NO MORE. HERE IS A LIFE RENEWED BY THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. IT IS THE “GOLD STANDARD” FOR US TO FOLLOW AND DEMONSTRATE TO PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES!

JESUS CONFRONTED ALL THE PEOPLE IN THIS STORY. THERE WAS FORGIVENESS FOR ALL, BUT NOT ALL CHOSE TO REPENT, WHICH TO ME IS SIMPLY SAYING “I WAS WRONG, FORGIVE ME” THEN WHEN WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, THEN JESUS CHALLENGES US GO, BEING RENEWED, AND SIN NO MORE.

WHAT DID JESUS WRITE IN THE GROUND?

IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE, IT WAS WHAT HE SPOKE AND HIS ACTIONS THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE. WE MUST ALL HAVE OUR WORDS, OUR ACTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. AMEN.