
INTRODUCTION

After looking over the building, it was obvious, – tear it down!

Sometimes “Demolition” is the best answer.

Demolish the old, get rid of what is rotted, worn, deteriorated, unsalvageable.
Start fresh! Uninhibited by all the work of trying to repair what is broken, ruined.
Bring in new material, and build with a new blueprint to guide the construction.
A “New” Beginning.

In business “bankruptcy” is also an opportunity for a “New” Beginning.

Get rid of all the debt that restricts any prospect to chart a new course,
and to leave behind bad ideas and inefficient practices that led to failure.

Many a business, restructured in “bankruptcy” has emerged to become profitable
and build on the success of new strategies.

A “New” Beginning, starting over from scratch,
leaves behind all the failures of the past that weigh upon a person
and allows unrestricted opportunity to chart a new course, travel a new path.

SETTING

When the Israelites left Egypt under Moses,
and passed through the parted waters of the Red Sea,
it was a time of great excitement and anticipation of a new life free from slavery.
The “Promised Land” was before them,
with all the hope of prosperity, personal property and a good life.

It wasn’t long until challenges of life in the wilderness on the way to the “Promised Land”,
became obstacles to faith rather than opportunities to grow in their trust
in the God Who fought for and deliver His people from Egypt.

Soon many Israelites who sang the praises of God
after the parted waters of the Red Sea collapsed upon the army of Pharaoh,
began to grumble in thirst and hunger,
rather than trust God to provide in His goodness and love toward them.

Even after entering the “Promised Land” and gaining victory over its inhabitants,
the people Israel did not remain loyal and loving of the God Who gave them victory,
instead, compromising with the culture of the Canaanites around them,
worshiping their gods and imitating their lifestyles.

For generations, God tried to guide the Israelites back on the “right path”,
following Him and His ways.

Instead of heeding the words of the prophets and turning back to God in repentance,
generation after generation of the people of Israel persisted in going their own way.

Finally, God determined it was time to “tear down” the old building,
it was time to “declare bankruptcy”,
and God gave the people of Israel over to their enemies,
and they lost their country, their personal property, everything.
Some Israelites died at the hands of the enemy forces that attacked them.
Many survivors of the war were taken into exile in a foreign land – Babylon.

Homeless and helpless, Israel learned the most important Truth
any person, any people, any nation, can learn about life,
that God is their strength, His ways are wise and beneficial,
and apart from Him, no one is secure and prosperous.

A NEW BEGINNING

Homeless and helpless, Israel was not Hopeless!
Where God had “torn down” a people who were corrupt and ungodly,
Where God had “declared bankruptcy”
of a people who were truly spiritually and morally bankrupt,
God would build anew and God would restructure and exit bankruptcy
unhindered and unrestricted by the failures of past generations.

In a second “Exodus”, this time not from slavery in Egypt,
but from exile in Babylon, the Israelites would return to their land, Israel,
rebuild Jerusalem, rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem,
and begin anew in devoting themselves to the Lord their God,
in uncompromising worship of God alone, – no idols!

But the real “Hope” of Israel was not the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem,
nor in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem,
as all their efforts paled in comparison to the Jerusalem of king David
and in comparison to the Temple built by king Solomon.

The real “Hope” of a “New Beginning” was not to appear for centuries,
in the coming of the Lord Himself to redeem His people!

*²They shall see the glory of the LORD, (of Yahweh, the God of Israel),
and the majesty of God...
Behold, your God... will come and save you!*

The “Hope” of Israel, the “Hope” of all people, is the work of the Lord to free His people,
from all that enslaves and impoverishes them!

God, in His power, freed Israel from slavery in Egypt!
God sent the plagues upon Pharaoh and Egypt!
God parted the waters of the Red Sea that Israel may pass through safely!
God closed the waters on the army of Pharaoh and soundly defeated the Egyptians!
God, and God alone, has the power to free mankind from sin,
from the deception of the devil, from the power of death, and from damnation.

When God became flesh in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit,
God came in His power and His love, to free man from sin and all sin’s consequences.

Jesus demonstrated His power over sin and over its consequences time and time again.

When John the Baptist was imprisoned, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus,

“Are You the One Who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

We don't know what prompted John to ask Jesus this question,

but we do know what Jesus gave as evidence
of His being the One promised by God in prophecy,

“Go and tell John what you hear and see:

*⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk,
lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up,
and the poor have good news preached to them.*

Jesus answer points directly to the words recorded in Isaiah 35:

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Yes, the power of God in Jesus was at work to free those afflicted by the curse of sin.

Jesus did what no man by his own power could do for himself or for others!

Yet, Jesus exercised the power of God in humility and love,
not to crush the human enemy as God had done with Egypt and Pharaoh,
but to free those oppressed by man's enemies of sin, death, and the devil.

Thus, Jesus added these words in His answer to John as Jesus quoted Scripture:

⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by Me.”

In effect, Jesus told John,

“Do not be deceived by the humble use of My power to free the oppressed.”

Then Jesus showed how John the Baptist had likewise ministered in humility
as he prepared the people for the coming of the Promised One.

⁷What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

⁸What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing?

Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet?

Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

*“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
who will prepare Your way before you.”*

No, John did not work powerful miracles as Moses or Elijah,

John did not come in wealth or prominence or nobility,

but, nevertheless, he was more than a prophet,

John was the “Messenger” sent to prepare the way
for God to come and to save His people.

John prepared the “Highway, the Way of Holiness” as he called people to repentance,
to be “set apart” from sin and to look to God for salvation!

Yes, in Jesus, the “New Beginning” is worked by God and offered to mankind.

In this “New Beginning”

God “tears down” the Old Adam corrupt in sin and condemned by God.

Scripture teaches us:

⁴We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death,

Baptism is a “death” to all that we inherited from Adam.

In Baptism, God cuts us off from Adam, from sin.

But, God does not leave us “dead”, “cut off”!

No! God did not leave Jesus “dead” in the grave!

God raised Jesus to life, to live in victory over sin, over death.

So, in Baptism, God “kills” the Old Adam, cuts us off from “Adam”

and God then “raises” us, gives us a “new life”, joined to Christ,
as blameless, righteous, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In Baptism, we are given a “New Identity”, we are of “Christ”, not “Adam”!

The apostle Paul confesses his “New Identity”, his “New Beginning” in these words:

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,

Who loved me and gave Himself for me. – Galatians 2:20

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction to this message, I said:

*A “New” Beginning, starting over from scratch,
leaves behind all the failures of the past that weigh upon a person
and allows unrestricted opportunity to chart a new course, travel a new path.*

God “demolished” the old Israel, God declared Israel “spiritually, morally bankrupt”.

God used the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem, destroy Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem,
and to carry off the survivors into exile for 70 years.

A new generations, free from the bankruptcy of the past generations,

returned to Judah, to Jerusalem,

and laid the foundation for the coming of the Promised One generations later.

God sent His Son into the world, to “come” and “save” all mankind.

Yes, Jesus came in humility and exercised the power of God

to free those oppressed by sickness, death and the power of the devil.

Jesus offers mankind, you and me, a “New Beginning”.

The old Adam in “torn down”, declared “bankrupt”,

that God may give you a “New Start” in Christ!

The wonder and beauty of so many of the Christmas hymns

are your opportunity to fulfill this prophecy:

¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing;

everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.