

Something "Better" Than God Planned

by Dan Jenkins

For more than two hundred years, every person who entered the temple saw everything the way Solomon had established it. Entering through the east gate, one first saw the magnificent bronze altar designed by David and built and dedicated by Solomon. That was exactly the way it should be. One should not approach God's holy presence without a reminder of man's need for redemption from sin.

However, in the reign of Ahaz it all changed. As men entered through the east gate, the altar was not there. It had been removed toward the north side of the temple area (2 Kings 16:14). There was another altar, even greater in appearance, that now stood where the one dedicated by Solomon once stood. Men had forgotten that when Solomon finished his prayer of dedication of the temple, God sent fire from heaven to burn the sacrifices placed on the altar (2 Chron. 7:1). Yet, somehow that very altar had been replaced by a new one!

How had all this come about? King Ahaz (the father of righteous King Hezekiah) was in dire circumstances because the Syrians had come and besieged Jerusalem. Instead of turning to God for help, he asked the Assyrians to come help him and send treasures of gold and silver from the temple as gifts to the king of Assyria. The Syrians were defeated, and Jerusalem was saved. To show his gratitude for

the help given to him, King Ahaz traveled to Assyria and while there saw the beautiful altar used in pagan worship. He made drawings of that altar and an exact copy of it was soon brought into the holy temple in Jerusalem. God's plan for the bronze altar was rejected, and now a pagan altar stood in its place.

Evidently, King Ahaz saw the new altar and the pagan gods worshiped at that altar as being more desirable than the true God and the altar He had dedicated. Ahaz did not use the altar to worship pagan gods, he just preferred that altar above what God had designed.

Isn't this precisely what has happened to the holy church designed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus? It is not that difficult to read the New Testament and see what He planned. That church had no clergy/laity concept with a religious hierarchy ruling over His people. There were no reverends, vicars, or elevated priests. Morality was not defined and changed by church conferences or conventions where mortals decided the acceptability of the LGTB lifestyles of our day. It was so different then—baptism was always by immersion; the Lord's Supper was observed every Sunday; worship was designed to appeal to God rather than to entertain men.

Ahaz thought human wisdom was superior to God's wisdom, and America is making the same mistake today!

God-Hardened Heart

by Dan Jenkins

When one first reads those verses in Exodus about God hardening Pharaoh's heart, he can so easily arrive at the conclusion that God forced Pharaoh to do wrong. He can decide that man does not have free will for God totally controls the will of man. Is it possible to reconcile these two concepts?

To answer that let me ask, "How does your heart feel toward the Fijian government's plan to increase import duties on merchandise from the Cook Islands?" Is your heart hardened toward this? Is your heart tender toward such actions? The truth is that your heart is indifferent and neutral toward this.

Now consider Pharaoh's heart toward God before Moses came to confront him. Was his heart "pro-God" or "anti-God"? It was neither. He had lived all of his life with a neutral heart toward God. This obviously changed once he met Moses. He was forced to take a position—either positive or negative toward God's messenger.

Look carefully at those verses in Exodus. On two occasions before Moses ever confronted Pharaoh, God told Moses that He would harden the king's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3). How did Pharaoh react when he saw Moses' rod become a snake? He could no longer be neutral toward God, but when the Egyptian magicians duplicated what Moses did, "...the king's heart grew hard" (Ex. 7:13). When Pharaoh saw the plague of the frogs he told Moses to remove the plague, and he would release the Jews, "But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not

heed them, as the Lord had said" (Ex. 8:15). God did not force Pharaoh. The king hardened his own heart when confronted by God.

The same reaction was seen after the plague of flies, for "...Pharaoh hardened his heart" (Ex. 8:32). It was the same after the death of the cattle (Ex. 9:12). Read carefully what was said after the plague of hail. "He sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart" (Ex. 9:34). Confronted by the miracles he saw, God indeed hardened the king's heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27), but it was Pharaoh who made the decision!



So, what about God hardening your heart? Before you first confronted the Lord in your life, you were neutral, but that confrontation forced you to make a decision—you had to make a decision. If your heart was hardened, it was done because the Lord's gospel forced you to make a decision, but it was you who made the choice.

You can remain neutral about the Fijian/Cook Islands problem the rest of your life, for it does not involve your life. However, the response to the Lord's teaching will either cause your heart to grow more tender or grow harder. God will force you to make that decision. You cannot remain neutral!

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Mission Works

Westhill Works

Benevolence Program

Local Works

Cherokee Children's Home - www.chc4kids.org
House to House, Heart to Heart
In Search of the Lord's Way
Preaching Students - Southwest School of Bible Studies
The Truth in Love - www.ttil.tv
WVBS Online School - school.wvbs.org

Prison Works

La Poynor Prison Ministry - Steve & Carrie Handley

Foreign Works

Four Seas Bible College, Singapore - Peter & Pooi Fun Chin
New Zealand Harvest Missions - James & Emily Cammock

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Brent Stewart - 903.641.9052
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Cory Myers - 512.627.6672 (Youth & Family)
Tim Cooke - 903.641.5515 (Seniors)

Prayer List

James Ainsworth continues to recover from surgery at his daughter's house.

Continue to Remember: Gayle Garner, Velma McDougald, Bud Moore, Henry & Eula Parrish, Barbara Shore, Patty Williams, Meagan Gould

Service Men: Clay Bayes, Jason Book, Alston Compton, Robert Johnson, Ryan Payne, Douglas Ramsey, Ryan Stewart

Birthdays This Week

June 20 - Bobby Compton, Corey McDougald

June 21 - Jeanie Slaughter

June 22 - Callie Bearden, Carter Bearden,
Paige Jennings

June 25 - David Mahoney

Next Week's Adult Class

Jesus Heals Ten Lepers
(Luke 17:11-19)

Announcements

Registration is Now Open Online for both the Girls' & Boys' Leadership Initiatives. Please, register. All of the information is available online with the form.

Girls' Leadership Initiative is this weekend! Register now online. See Cory for more details.

Summer Youth Series this Tuesday hosted by West Mansfield. We will leave at 5:30 PM.

North Beaton Church of Christ is having VBS this week at 7:00 PM each night (Mon. - Fri.) Classes will be provided for 2 year olds through adults.

Ladies' Day at East Side this Saturday at 9:15. Linda Brown from the Graham St. congregation in Waxahachie will speak on the theme "Fashioned by the Master."

5th Sunday Format Next Week! Please, bring a favorite dish and stay for a meal and fellowship together followed immediately by our second service led by the young men.

Vacation Bible School is coming up July 11-13. The theme is Cast Away and will delve into the life of Peter. If you'd like to help, see Justin Williams.

Important Dates:

Youth Mission Trip - July 16-20

Boys' Leadership Initiative - July 29-31

Summer Youth Series (Here!) - August 2

Records for June 12, 2016

Bible Class	160
AM Worship.....	217
PM Worship.....	118
Wednesday	134
Contribution	\$7,480.71

Privileged to Serve

Song Leader	David Dilbeck
Opening Prayer	Brian Hand
Communion Leader	Bryan Bearden
Communion Servers	
Luke Baumgartner	Tyler Baumgartner
Tanner Bearden	Wade Braly
Joe Glass	Ken Green
Wade Hall	Caleb Jackson
Andy Parrish	Wayne Prater
Thomas Saunders	David Shastid
Bronny Watson	
Closing Prayer	James Olsen
Nursery	Lindsay Olsen, Korri Owens
Security	Scott Barham, David Baumgartner, Mike Drain
PM Song Leader	Justin Mahoney
PM Opening Prayer	David Mahoney
PM Closing Prayer	Joe Glass
Wed. Song Leader	Joshua Haden
Wed. Summer Series Speaker	Clint Brown
June Contact Elder	Percell Milton - 903.673.1819