

My Thoughts for Sunday, 10 July 2016
“When the Bough Breaks”

*“When its boughs are withered, they will be broken off;
The women come and set them on fire.
For it is a people of no understanding;
Therefore, He who made them will not have mercy on them,
And He who formed them will show them no favor.”*
Isaiah 27:11

I am reminded of a nursery rhyme from my childhood as I read this verse from the prophet Isaiah. It went something like this:

Rock-a-bye Baby, on the treetop.
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall.
Down will come baby, cradle and all.

Isaiah was not warning the Israelites against placing their babies in their cradles in the treetop. He was delivering a severe warning, from God, that as they moved further away from His commands they were in serious danger of being cut off from His favor and ultimately being destroyed. God was justified in this warning as the Israelites had been His chosen people since before He had taken them out of slavery in Egypt. He had personally led them through the desert and to the land He had promised their ancestors, flowing with milk and honey. Throughout that entire journey they had rebelled against Him and forsaken His guidelines. Now, again, He was giving them a last warning that was about to cost them His favor and their very lives.

He is likening them to a great tree whose branches are withering and dying, just as they were withering and dying in their love for Him. He tells them, through Isaiah, that these branches, as they died, would be cut off and thrown into the fire, symbolizing total destruction. The Israelites, especially, should have seen what was about to befall them. They had been chastised by nation after nation; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Rome, throughout their existence. God had raised these nations to bring the Israelites back into His favor. These nations, through their own pride of greatness, love of money and a myriad of other sins, had been destroyed by this same God of the Israelites. Now Isaiah was prophesying that many of them were becoming like withering branches to be cut off and burned in the fire of eternal destruction. As the Israelites fell away from their God and were destroyed we find another prophet pleading with God for a return of His favor. Let’s look at the prayer of Habakkuk. *“Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.”* Habakkuk

3:2. Habakkuk knew of the mercies of God. He knew that if the people would only turn around in their lives, back to God, they would be forgiven and spared.

Habakkuk's prayer was about to be answered. The fulfillment of that long awaited prophesy was about to come to fruition. God sent His Son, our Savior, into the world as a child, just as had been prophesied by the prophets of old. This God/man was the ultimate fulfillment of the promise given to our first parents after their fall into sin. The One to redeem us from our sins! The One to make us right and acceptable to God! The One who would open heaven's gates for His followers to gain their eternal home! Read what Paul said under inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, "*From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.*" (Acts 17:26-27)

God has orchestrated the forming of nations, their rise to power and their ultimate demise. God did this, as we are told by Paul, "*so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.*" We, too, in this USA have been set up as a nation by God that we might seek Him and keep His commands. We have developed as a nation from that baby in the cradle to what has been labeled as the greatest nation in the world. We profess to be a Christian nation. We claim equal rights for all, including, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But how many of these claims are actually in evidence? Are we a Christian nation as we deny the right to pray in our schools and other public places? Are we seeking the God who formed this nation for the purpose of seeking and loving Him? Do we truly enjoy equality for all? Do we all have the right of life as we condemn thousands of unborn children to death annually? We claim the right to the pursuit of happiness but seem to place our happiness only in material THINGS. Things that only temporarily give us pleasure until something better comes along.

Or are we, like the Israelites, becoming withering boughs? Are we doomed as a nation to be cut off from God's tree of life and be thrown into the fires of destruction?

Have we gone so far astray that we cannot again pursue happiness? That happiness that can only come from a relationship with our Creator? Our Savior? Our Redeemer? God's plan for our nation has not changed, "*God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.*"

The time has come for us to join the Psalmist in his request to God for revival. "*Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?*" (Psalm 85:6)