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THE LORD'S RENEGADES

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*"I will stretch out My hand against Judah, And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem... Those who have turned back from following the LORD, And have not sought the LORD, nor inquired of Him."
(Zephaniah 1:4a, 6)*

One of the worst visible sins God's people commit today is the sin of neglecting the Lord. In this manner many churches and denominations became cold or completely die because they have stopped actively seeking God. Pastors are being caught in sin and their secret sins are being exposed to the light because they have neglected the Lord and relied on their strength, authority,

intellect and financial capabilities.

On the other hand we have self-justified believers who smile mockingly at the fallen while they rise up in pride proclaiming they are free from sin; however they do not see that according to Zephaniah they commit the horrible sin of neglecting of the Lord. They may have well ordered life, are not addicted to alcohol, are not idolatrous or lustful, yet they do not know that their day of judgment and downfall is close at hand because they have failed to seek the Lord nor do they care any longer for their Savior.

Zephaniah was the prophet in the days of King Josiah. In 2 Kings Josiah ordered that

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the Book of the Law be read and spiritual renewal be sought by all. However, we read that after the book of the law was read and understood that the nation did not obey. God began the awakening through a reform in Judah. The prophet was used in this awakening as he warned of the dire consequences awaiting the nation if they failed to repent or the corresponding blessings if they obeyed the words of the law.

Although this great awakening turned the nation to God, it did not completely eliminate idolatry; therefore this spiritual renewal lasted only for a short time. It is always so if we do not completely walk away from our sin and this world. We may gradually be awakened but never completely freed and will finally end in defeat.

Twelve years after Joshua's death, Judah was defeated by Babylon as a result of God's judgment.

★ **It is very important to remove all obstacles in order to let God work in our lives. It is not enough to say, "I'm sorry" and then go on our merry way: we must truly repent for only through repentance will He abide among us.**

It is very important to remove all obstacles in order to let God work in our lives. It is not enough to say, "I'm sorry" and then go on our merry way: we must truly repent for only through repentance will He abide among us. Furthermore, it is very important to actively and constantly seek Him. This is the only way to keep our joy and strength and to remain separated from the world otherwise we will become God's renegades - churches, pastors and believers who do not have a living relationship with Him and who do not care about Him. Who are the Lord's renegades?

► **1. THE LORD'S RENEGADES ARE BELIEVERS WHO DO NOT TAKE CARE TO SEEK THE LORD**

The Lord's renegades are not those who, because of past sins, have fallen back into the world; they may be well ordered believers who continue attending church but their hearts remain cold toward the Lord and His commands.

Baqash is a Hebrew word for "not seeking" and literally means to actively seek something or somebody in prayer or worship. In other words, God sent His judgment to Judah because they ceased seeking God. They no longer depended on Him but relied on worldly principles. We commit the worst kind of sin when we fail to rely on Him and instead begin to rely on charisma with no character, good feelings, relationships, questionable

methods, and worldly principles of living; all of which at first may work but in the end lead to disaster.

God had lifted His hand against Judah because they did not completely reject foreign practices; for example, they worshiped Baal, the god of strength and fertility, they put their trust in statues made with hands as they continued in idolatry, they put their confidence in themselves; trusting their positions and material possessions. These sins finally overtook the functions of the Lord as consciously or unconsciously they became the Lord's renegades.

Even the priests and spiritual leaders did God's things in worldly manners in those days. The Scripture says that they "*are clothed with foreign apparel...*" **(Zephaniah 1:8b)**

The foreign apparel showed their desire for foreign gods and worldly ways. The spiritual leaders accepted some of foreign mannerisms and in turn neglected His principles. This is the state of the church today, She is rendered powerless against the world; she identifies herself with the world by trying to reach people in a worldly manner; throwing out bait without the power of renewal and repentance. Instead of born-again Christians we have those who are only half born-again, people who know Christian clichés and behaviorisms but without renewal in their hearts. This is

the reason for so much worldliness in the church today because over the course of time these have acquired positions of authority and, through their unbridled manner, promote tolerance, liberalism and ecumenicalism bringing upon themselves judgment. "*For the day of the LORD is at hand.*" **(Zephaniah 1:7)**

Zephaniah warns them and says: "*The great day of the LORD is near; It is near and fastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers..*" **(Zephaniah 1:14-16)**

★ **We commit the worst kind of sin when we fail to rely on Him and instead begin to rely on charisma with no character, good feelings, relationships, questionable methods, and worldly principles of living; all of which at first may work but in the end lead to disaster.**



Many believers will be content with the “status quo” and judged because they do not believe that what happened to Judah, when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, could happen to them as well. Judgment can be manifest in various ways but is often seen on the second generation. Many pastor’s children, or children of active members, do not care about the Lord nor do they follow Him. There are those who believe that their children will not fall into gross sin because they, as parents, are not bound by certain habits and worldly behavior, however they are passive in seeking God. They somehow suppose that God is only a merciful grandfather who “understands” and gives us what we need but has no distinct power.

They forget that He is holy and punishes every injustice as well as those who do not depend on Him and do not actively seek Him.

God will cleanse His church from the sleepy condition and lazy false brothers and sisters who, in their lulled lives, think that nothing will happen to them. God will come to those “*Who are settled in*

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complacency, who say in their heart, ‘The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.’ **(Zephaniah 1:12)** A few days ago as I was coming back from a near-by town I heard a well-known Charismatic Catholic priest give false hope to people by saying that, apart from temporary judgment, God will judge nobody. However, God says that in the days of judgment to come, many people “*will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.*” **(Revelation 9:6)**

Zephaniah says that in the days of Lord: “*That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess... day of trumpet and alarm I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, (Because they have sinned against the LORD) Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them ...*” **(Zephaniah 1:15-18)**

Spiritual understanding will be stripped from the Lord’s renegades, driving them to despair, trouble and fruitlessness and God will leave them to wriggle and rely on their own strength but they will not be rescued from God’s judgment.

- ▶ **2. THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR THE LORD’S RENEGADES IS TO HUMBLE THEMSELVES AND SEEK HIM**

„Gather yourselves together, yes, gather

together, O undesirable nation, Before the decree is issued, Or the day passes like chaff, Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you! 3 Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zephaniah 2:1-3)

The only way is to humbly and actively seek God, follow Him and His ways. It is not sufficient to intellectually agree that we have wandered from Him; we must do something about it. Jesus clearly said that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" **(Matthew 7:21)**

Today's church is to blame. It is inefficient to merely speak while failing to carry out Jesus' words. Many believers only listen and intellectually agree with Jesus yet do not carry out His commands; they will not see the Lord and in the end will be punished to wander with this world!

But those who, in repentance, turn from the sin of self-reliance will find mercy in their midst that completely changes their lives: "For the LORD their God will intervene for them and return their captives." **(Zephaniah 2:7b)**

God has its holy remnant – the church that will not conform to this world and the

glory of God will abide with them! They do not rely on finances, the glory of this world or the people they know but in the living God. This church will not experiment with methods from the east or west or use religious clichés but will be a living and effective church for Jesus Christ and steadfastly protect His kingdom; they will be fishers of men not merely maintainers an "aquarium" filled with half dead fish.

The Lord Himself will abide in it! Believers who do not seek Him will not stay long rather they will seek out fellowships where they can live as they want, they will accumulate teachers who will "tickle their ears" for profit. Churches and denominations that do not actively seek Him will have to pay the price for their self-sufficiency, neglect and "for their pride,

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because they have reproached and made arrogant threats against the people of the LORD of hosts". (**Zephaniah 2:10**)

Religious and renegade churches will be united with the world, the Roman Catholic Church and other religions proving themselves as tolerant while at the same time persecuting and mocking the living church of Jesus Christ. God has ordered a horrible judgment for them! Instead of caring for their brothers they will only want to promote their name and their own plans. On TV they will shout: "I am the one, it is all about me!" They will "become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down..!" (**Zephaniah 2:15**)

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filled with their own. They will not draw close to God because they are renegades!

Fasting and intercession are an unknown activity to them. Their bellies are fat from the pleasures from this world! In the name of bogus spirituality they manipulate in order to draw wounded and emotionally unstable people for their own benefit; they are true wolves in sheep's clothing! Such, says Zephaniah, are ordered for disaster and desolation!

"Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city! She has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the LORD, She has not drawn near to her God. Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; Her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning. Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, They have done violence to the law." (**Zephaniah 3:1-4**)

► **3. IN THE DAY OF THE LORD'S JUDGMENT ONLY THE HUMBLE NATIONS WILL SURVIVE AND GOD WILL ABIDE WITH THEM**

If such churches will truly repent, seek Him with all their heart, and do what is right by following His commands they may be protected on the day of "His anger" *Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. .Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger.* (**Zephaniah 2:3**)

When I say “maybe” I mean that it all depends on Him; we cannot manipulate God. Several times we see in the Bible that although people repented God still had to execute judgment of great outrage. For example, we see that while David repented for adultery and murder God still took his child away. Or Joshua’s rebuilding; although there were great changes, the Scripture says: *“Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. And the LORD said, ‘I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, “My name shall be there.””* (2 Kings 23:26-27)

Only those who do not neglect Him may survive and bear good fruit in this profane oppression. The renegade church, and their believers who do not seek Him actively, will simply collapse! The enemy will overtake them because they did not want to be humble before God. God will remove the proud and leave the humble. That is what He has always done. The Scripture clearly says, *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

But He also promised to abide with believers who actively seek Him and show true repentance of their self-sufficiency because self-sufficiency and arrogance

cannot abide in God’s kingdom. *“I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall do no righteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed their flocks and lie down, And no one shall make them afraid.”* (Zephaniah 3:12-13)

The reason many people do not have joy and a desire for God is that they have never been humble or repentant of their sin! Only when they humble themselves and repent will they see joy in the church; only in this will our faces show rest from the reprehension we bear and are paralyzed with; only then will the Lord remove His hand of judgment, defeat our enemy and come abide with us! That is real joy!

Joy and happiness cannot be found when we remove ourselves from our relationship with God for He is the only person who can truly make us happy. Joy can be found

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when He is once again among us.

Then the Lord will rejoice over us with singing and we will no more be called “The Lord’s Renegades” but rather “The Victorious Remnant” because we have been obedient to Him. *“Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more. (**Zephaniah 3:14-15**)*

We need no more to fear because the Lord will be with us; our enemy will be defeated, He will change our destiny, and remove our troubles! Our reform will not be an outer “emotional show”; our hearts and lives will be changed if we cry and seek His help in the Day of Judgment.

*“In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:”
Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His*

*love, He will rejoice over you with singing. I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, Who are among you, To whom its reproach is a burden. Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, And gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame In every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will bring you back, Even at the time I gather you; For I will give you fame and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I return your captives before your eyes,” Says the LORD.”
(**Zephaniah 3:16-20**)*

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