

The Cares of This Life



Of all the things that distract us from Christian service, the simple "cares of this life" typically cause us the greatest trouble. In two different places, Jesus recognized the struggle we would have.

In the Parable of the Sower Jesus said there would be seed sown which would fall among thorns. That seed symbolizes those who hear the word and go out, but are choked with "cares, riches and pleasures of life" and as a result bring no fruit to maturity (Luke 8:14). We often focus solely on the "riches and pleasures of this life" aspect of the passage, but fail

to recognize that the simple "cares of this life" play a significant role as well in keeping us from being as fruitful as we could be.

In another passage, Jesus warned the disciples to take heed. In light of His inevitable return, Jesus reminded the disciples about being weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and "cares of this life" to the point that the Day of the Lord would come upon them unexpectedly (Luke 21:34). The Lord warns that we watch and pray always that we are counted worthy to escape these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of

Man (Luke 21:36). We might not have issues with carousing or drunkenness, but we all have cares in this life. Are those cares causing us to take our eyes off of that which is truly important. The reality is that the Day of the Lord will come upon the world as a snare, but it ought not be a snare for Christians who are taking heed to the type of life they are living.

The crux of both of these passages is that the "cares of this life" can cripple our faith to the point that we remain immature, become unfruitful and be counted unworthy. Let us therefore "take heed" and evaluate our priorities carefully. ~ Jonathan L. Perz

NAVARRE MESSENGER

Christ: The Prophet of Prophets



but their sources were declared abominations by God, so Jehovah promised to raise up prophets to make known His will. In this article we will notice the superstitions employed by the Canaanites during the time of Moses (as described in Deut. 18:10-12), and then see how Christ was "the Prophet" God would raise up.

Superstitions Of The Canaanites
The first superstition of the Canaanites mentioned by Moses was febration -- the practice of one making "his son or his daughter pass through the fire" (Deut. 18:10). The purpose of febration was to obtain an oracle, or to avert national disaster (cf. Deut. 12:29-31). This practice was common among the worshipers of Moloch, the national deity of Ammonites (Lev. 18:21). This abomination caused God to rout out the Canaanites (Lev. 18:24-30).

"To Baal-Haman, in great crises, living children were sacrificed, as many as three hundred in a day. They were placed upon the inclined and outstretched arms of the idol and rolled off into the fire

by David Padfield

men and put His word in their mouth (Deut. 18:9-22).

The book of Deuteronomy contains many warnings and admonitions for the people of God as they are about to enter the land of Canaan. The eighteenth chapter of the book contains a remarkable passage regarding the origin of the prophetic institution. God was going to raise up a body of

The Levites were the appointed teachers of the Law. However, in the promised land there would be new circumstances which would require further revelation from God. Canaan was a land filled with superstition -- they claimed detailed knowledge of the future,

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beneath; their cries were drowned in the noise of trumpets and cymbals; their mothers were required to look upon the scene without moan or tear, lest they be accused of impiety and lose the credit due them from the god." (Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, p. 42).

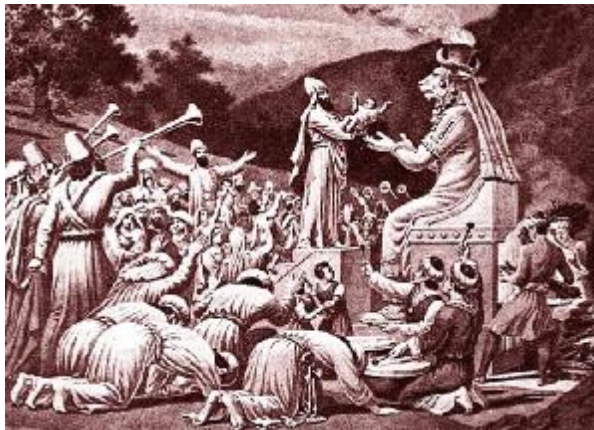
The next three terms used by Moses describe various methods of divination, including "one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens." God wanted His people to know these practices were powerless against His people, as expressed in Numbers 23:23, "For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor is there any divination against Israel." No soothsayer has any power against Israel, for Israel receives her information from the Lord.

Moses also mentions two other classes of divination, "a sorcerer, or one who conjures a spell," followed by two groups who seek after the dead, "a medium, or a spiritist." Manasseh reinstated many of these crimes when he was King in Judah (2 Kings 21:1-6). "Although these two words, 'ghost' and 'familiar spirit' are used side by side, there was nevertheless a distinction between them. The person who was possessed of an ob (ghost) was evidently a ventriloquist. Like the witch at Endor he might call up the ob and describe what he saw. Those about him would probably hear only a muttering or twittering which seemed to come from the ground. The 'familiar spirit' however, was evidently a spirit that was at the beck and call of a particular person." (Edward J. Young, My Servants The Prophets, p. 23).

"One who calls up the dead" is a comprehensive term which covers all forms of spiritualism.

"The context refers to sorcery, divination, spiritism, and other similar practices. Excavations at different sites have uncovered a great number of figurines, charms, amulets, and other objects connected with sorcery, fertility cults, demon exorcism, and pagan superstitions that at times propagated themselves in Israel to such an extent that legislators, prophets, and some rulers had frequently to warn the people against them." (Gonzalo Baez-Camargo, Archaeological Commentary On The Bible, p. 55).

"The list is indeed impressive. These superstitious practices which were so much in vogue among the Canaanites of ancient time are the reason why the Lord will dispossess these people of their land. Moses then advances a step. Not only are these practices in themselves abominations, he says, but also every one that doeth them is an abomination in



Artist's depiction of an offering of an infant to Moloch. The fire was in the belly of the image; the live child fell into it from the arms.

the sight of the Lord. It is for this reason that God will drive out the Canaanites from their land. It is well that we should grasp this fact, for it has sometimes been maintained that the God of the Old Testament was an arbitrary despot, who drove out the Canaanites and brought Israel into Palestine, and this, it has been said, was a cruel, arbitrary act. Such a judgment, however, is unjust, and out of accord with the facts. God, in dispossessing the Canaanites, was doing a gracious and merciful thing to the remainder of the world. The Canaanites, through their abominations, had themselves become abominations. If there was to be any salvation for the world, Canaan must go. The cup of their iniquity had filled, and they could no longer be permitted to exist as heretofore. Let no one, then, charge God with lack of justice in His treatment of Canaan." (Edward Young, p. 24).

In spite of all of the means of divination used by her neighbors, Israel would not have to resort to such means, for God would raise

up a Prophet "from your midst, from your brethren" (Deut. 18:15). Therefore, there would be no reason for Israel to turn to heathen soothsayers. God was going to raise up a body of prophets to declare His words, and later He would raise up one great Prophet, who alone could compare to Moses.

Christ Is God's Final Prophet

The New Testament often speaks of Christ as "the Prophet," a reference back to the promise given by God to Moses in Deuteronomy 18.

As John opens his account of the life of Christ he tells of the work of John the Baptist. On one occasion priests and Levites from Jerusalem went to John and inquired as to whether or not he was the Christ (John 1:19-23). When John denied being the long-awaited Messiah the priests and Levites then asked if he was Elijah, to which John answered "I am not." They then asked, "Are you the Prophet?" They wanted to know if John was "the Prophet" Moses had promised centuries before -- the answer was "No."

It was in the region of the Sea of Galilee that Jesus fed the 5,000 with "five barley loaves and two small fish" (John 6:1-14). When the people had been fed and there was still bread to spare, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, who is come into the world" (John 6:14).

On one occasion Jesus healed a lame man at the Pool of Bethesda. "Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God

was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). Jesus told these Jews, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). There are many Old Testament passages which speak of Christ, but the one He had in mind on this occasion was found in the writings of Moses. Jesus said, "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you -- Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:45-47).

What did Moses say about Christ? God told Moses, "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him." (Deut. 18:18-19). This passage was speaking of Christ, for Peter quoted it in Acts 3:22-23 and applied it to Him. Stephen quoted this same passage in the sermon which cost him his life (Acts 7:37).

On the Mount of Transfiguration our Lord stood with Moses and Elijah and discussed His impending death. Peter, overwhelmed in the moment, said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matt. 17:4). However, "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matt. 17:5). The point is clear: as great as Moses and Elijah were in their own right, we are to listen to God's Son today!

Jesus is God's final spokesman. The Hebrew writer reminds us of how "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." (Heb. 1:1-2).

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Conclusion

Concerning "the Prophet" who was to come, God said, "whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:19). The Hebrew writer mentions the consequences of neglecting the message of Christ. "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" (Heb. 2:1-4).

Have you listened to the words of Christ, God's final spokesman? If you reject the message of Christ, you will have rejected your only means of eternal salvation! ~