

## Are Things That Bad?

Why I Do the Commentaries

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 11-Dec-10; Sermon #1023c

I'm going to begin this commentary in the Bible because I want to read some verses that I feel are really significant for the times that we are living in. It's going to be in Deuteronomy 28. You know that's the blessings and curses for Israel.

**Deuteronomy 28:58-63** “If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LOORD YOUR GOOD, then the LOORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses. Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the LOORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LOORD your God. And it shall be [listen to this verse especially], that just as the LOORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LOORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess.

Hold your finger there and we are going to go to the Book of Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 11:14** “So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.

**Jeremiah 45:2-4** “Thus says the LOORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: ‘You said, “Woe is me now! For the LOORD has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.”’ “Thus you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LOORD: “Behold, what I have built I will break down [He's talking about Israel], and what I have planted I will pluck up, that is, this whole land.

Did you take note of the seriousness of what He said that He would do to Israel should they not repent? He said that He will rejoice to destroy them, even as He previously

Are Things That Bad? by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

rejoiced to bless them. Can you imagine God rejoicing in doing something like that? He adds to this, saying, "Don't pray for this people. I will pluck up what I have planted."

What is this from a God of love? Yes, it is because He also says that He hates evil that He will destroy whatever He finds, and He will do it when it comes time to do it. Therefore, when that time comes in Israel, He will do it because there are no hollow threats from God. He doesn't lie. He doesn't exaggerate. And yes, this warning was given the physical Israel, but it applies in type to us as well.

Do we take Him seriously enough, or have we been persuaded by the world's approach to God that He has just so much love that He could not possibly do what He says that he will do: Destroy, pluck up what He planted. How else can we live by every word of God, if we do not take seriously what He said in the sections that we just read? Even though it involves His chosen people, He will not back from His responsibility toward His greater purpose, which is to glorify Himself in reproducing Himself in the hearts and the character of His children.

Let's read again there in Deuteronomy 28:

**Deuteronomy 28:59-62** then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses. Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number . . .

Sickness seems to be everywhere in this nation. Just this week, I heard a report that the people who keep the statistics are now saying we have had one month cut off our life expectancy. Now, you can only expect to live the 77 years in the United States. It used to be right close to 78 years. That's how sick we are. Our mortality is increasing.

Besides these sick people in the world, we have a great deal of sickness in the church. Have you looked at what is on our prayer request pages lately? I am not saying that these people listed on our prayer pages are being punished. It could very well be that God is giving them the opportunity to actually increase their faith, and in His character as well, by testing them. God clearly said that He tested Israel in the wilderness to know what was in their heart.

I am saying these things because I do not think that all who are hearing my voice out there, on the telephone or the computer, believe me that things are as bad in this country as I am saying. But there are some of us right in this room—there is Evelyn and myself; there is Elise there; there is Joan Bowling back there—who can remember life in the late '40s and on into the '50s, when it was marvelous to live in the United States of America compared to what it is today. By comparison, they really were the good old days.

I am not saying that it was perfect. I think I have mentioned before that in four years of high school, with an enrollment of 500 people, the worst thing that I can recall ever happening there was a boy got caught throwing a lighted cigarette into a lavatory receptacle. This was a predominantly rural school that I attended, and it was turning very rapidly into an upper middle-class bedroom community for Pittsburgh. We certainly knew about the birds and the bees, but I cannot recall even one girl in four years who got pregnant and had to leave school.

I've gotten feedback that some do not like the commentaries because they are all downers, full of bad news. Well, let me tell you something. Realistically, is there any good news that is coming from the world that we live in? Let me remind you of something. Maybe some of you do not know this. Every *World Tomorrow* radio program and television program given by Herbert Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong opened with a segment of bad news from the world today. Am I out of line for doing just a small part, giving the same contrast?

Besides that, while in the Worldwide Church of God, the ministry was sent the Pastor General's report on a monthly basis, and every issue contained bad news reports the ministry was required to give to the congregation as they had time during the announcement period. I'm still following that tradition established by Mr. Armstrong during his lifetime as Pastor General, because I find, as he did, that it is spiritually productive to have news reported from a prophetic orientation.

In addition to that, one finds in the Bible that the prophets of God we are always noted for the bad news that they personally broadcast over Israel at God's behest. King Ahab addressed Elijah, "Is that you, oh troubler of Israel?" In other words, God approved of His prophets giving bad news, and then the good news followed.

I do not know about you, but we have some comedy records at home that make mention of this very fact. The comedian said in his spiel, "Every time God looks down, things are bad. Maybe if He did not look down so much, things would pick up!" Brethren, imagine what God sees in this mess now. Where in the world do you think that

Are Things That Bad? by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

comedian's remark come from? Well, I think it's obvious the man who wrote the joke knew a bit about the Bible, and he understood that the ministry within the Bible stirred things up, and this was not always sweet to hear.

Do you think the Jews killed Jesus because they loved Him? Because He brought to them the good news of the World Tomorrow? Not at all. They killed Him and the prophets before Him because He and the prophets said things that disturbed their sense of well-being enough that they were moved to reject them and their words, and eventually kill them.

I concentrate on the American government because they are an obvious and rich source from which to expose their hypocrisies, their outright lies, and the self-serving enactments that they give to us to submit to. I do this because we must learn that we cannot live nor govern as they do and still be in the Kingdom of God.

So a contrast is being presented to you almost every week. This cannot be in our personal lives, nor in the World Tomorrow. Now is the time to get ready to govern in truth and purity of purpose and in life, just as our Father and Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, already do.