

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 11, 2016

Ezekiel 23:1–49. Parable of the Two Sisters.

Revelation 11:1–14. The testimony of the Two Witnesses.

Job 35:9–16. Legalism or love?

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 23:1–49. To illustrate the nation’s unfaithfulness, the Lord used an allegory in which He compared Samaria and Jerusalem to two promiscuous sisters named Oholah and Oholibah. (Oholah means her tent and Oholibah my tent is in her. The latter name reflects the fact that God dwelt in the Jerusalem temple. The sisters had been prostitutes from their youth in Egypt. Though belonging to the Lord), they courted the favor of foreign nations. Oholah (Samaria) sought alliances with the Assyrians. She is portrayed as lusting after the Assyrian soldiers and prostituting herself among their officers. Ironically, her lovers killed her and carried away her children. Oholibah (Jerusalem) witnessed the fate of her sister but failed to learn from her example. She also lusted after the Assyrians and later turned her attention toward the Babylonians and others. Vivid language and harsh imagery are employed to depict her nymphomania. The Lord warned that her lovers would turn on her. The Babylonians would come against the land with all their military might and cruelly destroy her population. Oholibah would be publicly humiliated and suffer the fate of her sister Oholah.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. Note what happens when the people of God lose their love for the Lord in **23:5-13**. In the days when the nation was united, King David trusted the Lord to help him defend and deliver his people, but King Solomon’s policy was to make political treaties to guarantee peace. This is why he married numerous heathen princesses so that their fathers wouldn’t attack the Jewish nation. Samaria had no loving faith in the living God, so she looked to the Assyrians to help her. The picture here is that of a prostitute seeking a lover to care for her and the language is quite graphic. Samaria not only welcomed Assyria’s soldiers but also Assyria’s idols, and the religion of the Northern Kingdom became a strange mixture of Mosaic Law and Assyrian idolatry. Contemporary Christianity is guilty of much of the same type of whoredom as they care more about Mammon and their political savior than the church of Jesus Christ and the spiritual life. What we are most passionate about always reveals what we really love, and what we get upset about reveals what we love when that love is threatened. Without a doubt many Christians are far more passionate about their political lives than their spiritual lives. It is not like God did not warn the people of Judah, and it is not like Christ did not warn His followers. What is particularly troubling for me is when I see Christians bullied into voting for a certain candidate *out of fear*. The question of what Christ’s will is for each believer is not even part of the conversation. I find it especially distasteful when the name of Jesus Christ is used by pastors to tell their congregations how they must vote—as if believers possess no personal guidance from Jesus. This is unconscionable! There is not even the advice to consult one’s conscious before the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider how Jesus Christ would react if believers told Him that He better vote for a Herod rather than a Pilate and tried to

intimidate Him with fear if He did not make their choice? While none of us knows exactly what He would say, I am absolutely confident, nonetheless, that it would include severe admonition to keep focus and hope on the coming kingdom and that God is in control. Christ was no deist! That is my point and concern! There should be far more passion about the spiritual life than political life, far more about what the pastor is teaching than what the candidates are saying. But who really lives for the coming kingdom? and while making good decisions as a good citizen guided by the Lord, does not live in fear if his candidate does not win? Overcomers! Life in God *by proper knowledge and by proper love* is not a life that has anything to fear—not even if Hilary wins the election. However, if one puts politics above the spiritual life, there is plenty to fear, fret, get distracted about, and get angry about because of the threat to one's perceived true wealth, Mammon. In *proper knowledge and proper love* our hope is on the Lord not a political savior. It is the only life that can live in peace during turbulent times for it is the only life that really believes that God is in control. Who are the blessed in Matthew 5:3-16?

Revelation 11:1–14. Numerous and varied interpretations have been given concerning the two witnesses. Some have suggested that they are not literal individuals. However, in view of the fact that they die and are resurrected, the implication is that they are actual people. Moreover, while there is room for considerable discussion of these various views, the fact is that the passage does not identify the two witnesses, they probably do not have historic identification. Like prophets of old the two witnesses will be able to do supernatural miracles, and fire will destroy those who will try to harm them (5). Like Elijah they will have power to stop rain, and will have power like Moses to turn water into blood and to bring on plagues (6). In the midst of the unbelief, apostasy, and satanic power of the Great Tribulation these two witnesses will be a threat to the entire wicked world for a literal period of 1,260 days.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. In verses 7-10, God permitted His faithful two witnesses to be murdered and their bodies left unburied in Jerusalem in shame as the whole world gloated. For 3 ½ days the whole world gloated over their dead bodies. This worldwide display is now made possible by television. Their deaths were considered a great victory for Satan and his people celebrated their death “by sending each other gifts”—oh! how loving! Of course this “happiness” is short-lived as divine judgment is around the corner. As we walk in the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love* we will not be concerned with what the world thinks of us or does with us. When our love is set on the Lord, it is His approval and justification we seek, not the world's. In *proper knowledge and proper love* our hope is on the Lord not approbation of the world. Blessed are those . . . (Matt. 5:3-16).

Job 35:9–16. Elihu now addresses Job’s earlier statement that God ignores the cry of the oppressed for help. Elihu shifts attention from the oppression itself to the motivation and attitude of the oppressed. Instead of suffering driving the afflicted to God, they are so preoccupied with their misery that they ignore God. Here man needs to observe animals who, by instinct, turn to God. Further, the oppressed are not heard due to their arrogance. Elihu actually calls the oppressed “wicked” (12). This fits in with his idea that oppression is a divine means of discipline, exercised upon those who need it. Another reason for no response is that God does not listen to an empty plea. Clearly, Elihu has placed the onus of unanswered prayers on the shoulders of the person praying. How can Job expect God to hear him since his cry is more against, rather than to, God? Elihu clearly puts the blame upon Job for God’s silence. While there is general truth in Elihu’s arguments about unanswered prayers, there is nothing directly pertinent here to Job’s condition.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. In the Job reading, the God that God Elihu described is not typically beneficent but one who responds only to His sincere devotees. His God has no time for those who call only when they are in trouble, who use their shallow faith only in emergencies, and who have no time for God when times are good. Elihu put Job in that category and castigated him even further for charging God with elusiveness and failure to exact justice. While Elihu was somewhat correct in his theology, it was not applied appropriately. Had Elihu been walking with the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love* He would have included God’s unconditional love and by walking in the Lord, he would have shared in God’s love for Job.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don