

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: December 8, 2013

Ebenezer and Yahweh-Yireh

by Dan Trygg

“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far Yahweh has helped us.’”
I Samuel 7:12

“Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh-Yireh, as it is said to this day, ‘In the mount of Yahweh it will be provided.’”
Genesis 22:14

“You have searched me and known me. ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. ³ You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Yahweh, You know it all. ⁵ You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.”
Psalm 139:1-6

“‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”
Jeremiah 29:11

Sometimes it is good to stop and take stock of where we are, and where we are going. It is easy to get caught up in the busyness of everyday, and forget where we came from, or the significant milestones of our lives. We may not realize that we are here for a reason, or that God has something in mind for us. Some of us would just as soon *forget the past*, because it was painful. Or, maybe we are going through a difficult time *right now*, and it seems like all we can do is get through the next day, or even the next hour. **In Romans 1, the ones who were wandering from God and His ways did not see fit to keep Him before their conscious minds. We can choose to do the opposite.** We can choose to *remember* the deeds He has done. We can *recall* and *recount* the answers to prayer we have received from His hand, or the deliverances He has worked on our behalf. We can apply ourselves to learn His ways, and discover how to recognize His actions in our lives. **We can choose to honor God with our attentiveness and our obedience, and, in response He will reveal more of Himself, His power and His purpose for our lives.**

The prophet Samuel called Israel’s attention to what God had done for them, so they would not fail to recognize that it was God, not their efforts alone, that had given them victory over their enemies, the Philistines. They had dominated Israel for over twenty years, and Israel had grieved and lamented over the difficult struggles they endured at their hands. Samuel had reminded them that behind all of their sorrow and degradation had been a departure from the things of God. They had forgotten Yahweh and had gone after other gods, deities who were supposed to bring rain and good crops. Their devotees promised wealth and prosperity to those who would follow these idols. The devil is a liar, however, and instead of the prosperity that was promised, they brought on themselves the consequences and judgments God had warned them of centuries before. **Samuel’s ministry had been to call them back to the Lord, saying that if they returned to Him with all their heart, God would deliver them from the oppression of their enemies.** People were heartened by this word of hope, and began to put aside their idolatrous practices and return to following God. As this renewal spread, Samuel called all Israel to gather to him at Mizpah for a time of prayer, fasting and seeking God. **When the Philistines heard that they were gathering, they organized their forces and came up to attack Israel. The people were terrified, and they asked Samuel to pray for their deliverance from their enemies.** As Israel worshipped God, the Philistines drew near to attack. **God thundered with so great a thunder that the Philistines were confused, and broke ranks before the Israelites, and they were routed and decimated by Israel. After this great victory, Samuel gathered the people together to underline the point: This was God!** He set up a rock as a pillar as a sign and memorial of God’s great deliverance. He called it “Eben-ezer” or “Rock of help”, saying, “Thus far Yahweh has helped us.”

Some observations from that incident. (1.) Israel had wandered out of God’s blessing and protection by disregarding and disobeying Him. The difficulties, defeats, disease and disaster they were experiencing were consequences God had warned of centuries before (Deut. 28,29). Many in our culture are reaping the consequences of living in ways that are destructive, ways that God has warned us to avoid. By disregarding His counsel, people are experiencing debilitating pain and bondage. **(2.) God raised up a prophet, Samuel, to call them back to Him.** In the same way, God will bring people or circumstances into *our* lives that are designed to draw our attention back to Him. He is the hope and answer to our troubles. **(3.) As they started to refocus on God, the enemy came on even stronger!** It *often* gets worse, before it gets better. This makes sense, because the enemy does not want to let us go. Many times, when he turns up the pressure, people will give up their pursuit of God. If only they could recognize that this is a direct countermove to *keep them from God*, maybe they would *press through* the opposition and pursue God all the more. **(4.) In spite of their fear, they asked for God’s help, and He gave them a mighty deliverance.** Note

the progression: Call of God; initial interest or response; enemy countermove to cut off the interest; further reaching of faith; God's deliverance from the enemy's attack. We will experience the same thing in our lives. Why? Because we have the same three players: God, people, and the forces of evil. Notice that we are in the middle? We *are*. In the *middle*. Until we understand that, we are merely pawns, lured by dark forces into dangerous places, or lulled to sleep and ineffectiveness. BUT, if we can see that we can effect change with God's help, then we can be *more* than pawns, we can be *participants in the battle*. In the face of fear, ...we can call upon God. In the face of pain, ...we can call upon God. In the face of difficulty, ...we can call upon God. In the face of opposition, ...we can call upon God. Faith is the assurance that God is the rewarder of those who will diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:1,6). **(5.) They still had to deal with the counter attack, ...but they did it with God's help.** They still had to fight the battle, ...just as we still have to fix what is broken, or go where God wants us to go, or do what God wants us to do, or say what God wants us to say, or give what God wants us to give, or say, "No." to temptation. Our calling upon God does not generally mean that He will magically *do* everything. He wants to partner *with* us, not just do things *for* us. **(6.) They saw their victory as step toward a larger objective. They realized it was just one battle in a larger war.** The *war* was not over. It would not be over as long as there were enemy combatants and strategies opposing them. It was just a momentary victory in a much larger campaign. It was a lull in the fighting. We need to recognize this, as well. There is a clash of kingdoms here. The warfare will not cease until Jesus returns. Some days will be relatively peaceful. Other days will feel like all hell is breaking loose at us, ...because it is! The enemy is mounting another attack. What do we do? In spite of the fear, the anxiety, the pain, the weariness, the limited resources, etc., we are to call upon God! He is our hope, our fortress, our provider, our deliverer. He will bring a counter offensive, if we wait for Him. Then, **when we recognize the deliverance, we are to praise Him and declare, "Thus far has Yahweh helped us."**

The second passage to consider is about Abraham. The Lord had asked him to offer his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. This may seem incredulous to us, but many other people worshipped gods who required human sacrifice. Abraham did not know what Yahweh required. It was a test of loyalty. He loved Isaac very much. Would he be willing to offer him to God? As he and Isaac made their way to the place God had instructed him to go, his mind tried to understand what God had said to him. He knew that God had told him that Isaac was the seed of promise, through whom he would have many descendants, ...and now God was requiring him to offer him as a sacrifice. How could this make sense? He did not know. Would God raise him from the dead? When they had left their men to go off by themselves to offer the sacrifice, Isaac asked him, "where is the lamb for the offering?" Abraham could only say, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the offering". When he had tied his son up, and prepared to slay him, the Angel of the Lord *stopped* him, and told him *not* to slay his son. He said, "Now I know you reverence God, because you have not withheld your son, your only son from me." Instead, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a ram in the thicket, caught by his horns. He took the ram and offered it in place of his son. Afterwards, **Abraham called the name of the place "Yahweh-Yireh", which means "Yahweh provides"**. This appears to be the same site as the crucifixion of Christ, centuries later. That is the back story for the name, Yahweh-Yireh. There is another level to this name, however, which is not evident to those of us who do not speak Hebrew. **Yireh is a form of the verb, *raah*. It literally means, "He sees"**. Our English word, "provide" comes from the Latin words, "pro" and "vide", literally translated as "to see beforehand". The implication of this, in *both* of these languages, is that **if "God sees", "He will provide"**. **God's awareness of our need will result in His action to meet our need. And, of course, God is always aware of our needs.** *Nothing* is hidden from His sight. Psalm 139 beautifully describes the extent of God's knowledge and concern for us. He searches us and knows us. He knows all we are doing, and even all we are thinking. He is intimately acquainted with all of our ways. He encloses us behind and before, and puts His hand upon us. Jesus said that He knows the number of the hairs on our heads (Matt. 10:30). No creature is hidden from His sight. In fact, all things are open and laid bare to His eyes (Heb. 4:13). **Jesus brings this home in Matthew 6:31-33, "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the unbelievers eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."**

Yahweh-Yireh looks to the future. It is a belief that God *sees* the need, and He will *supply* for that need, so that we will have *what* is needed, *when* it is needed. **God has plans for our lives. His plan is to make our lives a blessing. His plan is to lead us into peace, not misery. His plan is to give us a future and a hope.** *That* is where we are heading, if we follow Jesus. He wants to make our lives positive, fruitful and honoring to Him. **We do not have to be anxious about the future. God sees what we need. He will provide. He has helped us this far. He will not abandon us.** Note that He has "plans", plural, ...not just one plan. **We may have seemingly made a mess out of our lives, but God has yet another plan. Call out to Him. Refocus on Him and His will. Don't be surprised if it gets harder, before it gets better. Press on. He sees, and He will provide.**