

## Ancient Landmarks

A little girl was sitting in church busily working on a colouring book that her mother had given her to keep her occupied. Suddenly, her eyes lit up and she began to pay close attention to what the preacher was saying.

After church, she thanked him for his message and said she was so glad her name was written in the Bible.

"And what might your name be?"

"My name is Edith," to which the preacher, a little puzzled, answered, "I don't seem to recall that name in the Bible, my dear."

A little flustered, she responded, "But, sir, didn't you say Jesus receives sinners and Edith with them?"

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Well, I'm glad that Jesus receives *little Ediths*.

And I'm so glad that Romans 10:13 tells us that . . . **"whoever"** . . . boy or girl, man, or woman . . . **"calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."**

But this morning, we will be focusing our attention on another subject, the spiritual battles that Christians face and the resources we have in Jesus.

—Prayer—

**"Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you."**

As we look in on Abram, He is living in Ur of the Chaldees and in the neighbourhood of his two brothers and his father.

No doubt he and his wife are living in a substantial dwelling situated on their own piece of land.

However, with God's commandment ringing in his ears, things were about to change.

Not only would they be uprooted from their settled way of life, but they would be going to a land that was completely unknown.

And by . . . "faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance."

And . . . "By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God."

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Sufficient to say . . . God kept His promises. Abraham's descendants became a great nation, and in due time they inherited the land of Canaan.

You can imagine after 40 years with no fixed address that real estate would be highly valued both by the people and by God Who had made this part of His promises.

Not only had each family been given their own piece of property, but permanent markers were put in place to indicate the boundaries of their inheritance.

And those markers were not to be tampered with.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 19:14 and we will see the severity of God's law.

Deuteronomy 19:14 **"You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess."**

And anyone who would dare disobey this command would incur God's judgment.

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This morning, we will not be concerning ourselves with these physical landmarks, as important as they were in Israel, but we will be turning our attention to what I'd like to call God's *spiritual* landmarks.

I think we have an indication of these spiritual landmarks in Romans 2:14-15 where we read " . . . **for when Gentiles, who do not have the law,** (that is God's written law) **by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts,**

(and I think this is the important word here—*written in their hearts*) **their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them***)."

Yes, throughout history, God has set up *spiritual landmarks* for the good of mankind.

And throughout history, man has challenged these markers—be they spiritual, moral, sexual, or social—to his own undoing.

Even in Paul's day we find that old believer warning Timothy that . . . "**in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors** (this is quite a list, isn't it?) **Headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.**"

And today, as we look around us, we see increasing evidence that God's spiritual landmarks are being moved—or completely disregarded—to the point that *wrong* has become *right* and *right* has become *wrong*.

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So, what should a believer's response be to the perilous times we live in?

Well, we shouldn't panic.

Mankind has a history of rebelling against God—and God has a history of always being in charge.

For instance, in Psalm 2 beginning at verse 1, the psalmist asks the question . . . **"Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed,** (notice that *against the Lord and against His Anointed*) **saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."**

In response, God "**. . . who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.**"

Not only will He laugh at their puny attempts to defy Him, but He will "**. . . speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure:**"

No, rebellion against God is no laughing matter.

**"Let us break Their bonds in pieces"**—to rebel against God is to rebel against His Anointed.

That's why the very next words in this Psalm are "**. . . I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.**"

Yes, God's answer to man's rebellion is "**. . . My King On My holy hill of Zion.**"

There's no doubt about it, Jesus will appear for a second time and exercise judgment upon God's enemies.

The good news is—not only is King Jesus the executor of God's judgement, but He is the channel through which God's love flows.

The good news is ". . . **God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."** John 3:16-17

Yes, ". . . **the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

But someone will say, *Oh, I'll be alright, I have always tried to be a good person.*

But, my friend, you will not be alright.

The Bible tells us ". . . **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** Romans 3:23

Let me give you a rather silly illustration, but one that illustrates this idea of *falling short*.

Let us suppose that I throw a stone in an attempt to hit the moon, and you, in trying to do the same thing, throw your stone much further.



While your attempt would be superior to mine,  
it would be the same in the sense that  
both of us have *fallen short* of our  
objective.

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At the other end of the spectrum, we have the  
person who believes he is just too bad to  
deserve a place in heaven.

And I'm sorry to say, that individual would be  
right, for ". . . **all have sinned and fall  
short of the glory of God.**"

But, in another sense, he would be wrong, for  
his performance has nothing to do with his  
ability to enter heaven.

**"For by grace you have been saved** (that's  
God's love) **through faith, and that not of  
yourselves;** (and here it is) **it is the  
gift of God, not of works, lest anyone  
should boast.**" Ephesians 2:8-9

And there are other reasons for rejecting  
God's gift that I will not discuss at this  
time only to say that all of them will end  
in disaster.

Jesus made that quite plain when He said . . .

**"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."**

Let me end my appeal with Peter's evaluation of the Lord he knew so well.

**"This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:11-12**

So, do not delay, accept Jesus today ". . .  
**now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."**

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Getting back to the believer in Jesus Christ—  
what should our response be to the  
troubling times we live in?

Certainly, there should be a genuine concern  
for the lost and a commitment to share the  
good news of salvation.

But, having said that, when it comes to our own personal needs, what are some of the challenges we face?

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I think we can safely say that two of Satan's most useful tools are *falsehood* and *fear*. When it comes to falsehood, I think you would agree that we are living in an age of *strong delusion*.

So much so that it is hard to find any basis for *agreement* even amongst our family and close associates.

I heard about someone who despairingly said—*My friends seem to be suffering from R. A. D. . . . that's Reality Avoidance Disorder*.

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As far as fear is concerned, Proverbs 29:25 tells us that . . . **"The fear of man brings a snare."**

And we don't have to look very far to find large populations that are controlled by a handful of leaders using *fear* and *falsehood* as their weapons of choice.

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However, the rest of Proverbs 29:25 paints a very different picture.

It tells us that ". . . **whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.**"

Not safe in the sense of protection from physical harm, although God might choose to do that.

Peter was marvellously delivered from prison—while James was killed with the sword.

In His wisdom, it is simply God's choice.

In our wisdom, we must. . . **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, (and here's the promise) And He shall direct your paths."**

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And it is interesting to note that when Jesus commissioned His disciples to be ambassadors of the kingdom and sent them forth into the towns and cities of Israel, He told them . . . **"I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."**

He also warned them not to let fear close their mouths concerning the good news of the kingdom.

Matthew 10:24-31 "A disciple is not above *his* teacher, nor a servant above his master.

"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *will they call* those of his household!

"Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. "Do not fear therefore; you are

of more value than many sparrows.

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

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And Peter, obeying Jesus' command to strengthen the brethren, encouraged the Christians with these words:

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

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Before we leave the subject of *fear*, let's look in on Edith, the little girl who thought her name was in the Bible. She is about a year older now and has accepted Jesus as her Saviour.

And so, even though her name was not in the Bible, she has the joy of knowing her Good Shepherd knows her name.

And Edith has been careful to obey Jesus' command . . . **"Children, obey your parents in all things,"** for she knows this will be . . . **"well pleasing to the Lord."**

As a result, Mommy has a willing helper—in the house and in the garden—and in so many other ways.

But what bothered her was the fact that her little helper seemed reluctant to sweep the kitchen floor.

Upon further investigation, she found out that her daughter was afraid of the dark.

And you guessed it.

The kitchen broom hung at the very back of a very dark closet.

Her mother tried to help her overcome this fear by reminding her that Jesus will be with her in every situation.

After all, hadn't David said ". . . **though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**"

I'm sure that was very reassuring, but it's hard to put our faith into practice, isn't it?

So, the next time Edith needed to retrieve the broom, she walked rather reluctantly up to the closet, opened the door just a little, and said "Jesus, will you hand me the broom?"

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Another area that a Christian must deal with is *government* and *politics*.

We are walking a fine line here.

As in every case, Jesus is our example.

He was born and raised in troublesome times, wasn't He?



And during His public ministry—when it became evident that He possessed the power of God—the people were determined to harness that power to defeat Rome.

But Jesus wasn't a political leader, nor was it His purpose to spearhead a revolution. When the religious leaders tried to trap Him by asking Him whether they should pay taxes to Caesar, He answered . . .

**"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."**

Oh, He recognized the corruption and injustice that existed in the Roman government, but opposing it wasn't His priority.

At His second coming, He will indeed rule over the nations, but at that time, His priority was to *seek and to save* those who were lost.

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And His under-shepherds, the early church leaders, did not encourage civil disobedience either.

Paul's instructions to the Christians in Rome were that . . . **"every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.**

And although fear of reprisal was part of the reason Paul gave for obeying government, it was not his only motivator.

No, He told them . . . **"you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing."**

I guess the bottom line is . . . a corrupt government is better than absolute anarchy.

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And today, as we consider our actions and reactions, we must not lose sight of the fact that we . . . **"are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's**

**behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**

That, of course, is our priority.

But we are also *the salt of the earth*, and we should use the opportunities we have been given to influence society in a positive way.

In my opinion, and you can disagree if you like, because we still live in a country where we enjoy a good deal of freedom, we should exercise our vote to support Christian politicians or simply those who are doing their best to stem the tide of corruption.

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Another example I can think of is *education*. As Christians, we are commanded to . . . *Train up our children in the way they should go*. Many of us have chosen *homeschooling* or some version thereof, and that is a very good idea.

But when a government insists upon teaching its citizens' children theories and ideas that are in direct opposition to their parents' desires and beliefs, it is time for us to speak up.

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And then there's the whole subject of *tribulation*.

When Eleanor and I were preparing to leave Canada to serve with Trans World Radio, my wife asked an old missionary who had spent a lifetime of service in Nigeria to share some words of wisdom with her.

He said, *You need to have the hide of a rhinoceros and the heart of a dove.*

Those words often came back to us.

And you don't have to go to a far country to encounter a good deal of *tribulation*.

Sooner or later, the very fact that we are mortal creatures will take us down the path of sickness and suffering, and some of us are presently dealing with that.

It's not nice, but in the wisdom of God, your fellowship in Christ's sufferings can make you more like Him.

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Another source of *tribulation* is simply the world we live in.

Truth of the matter is, a Christian is at war, not so much with people, although that is part of it, but . . . **"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."**

To counter this menace, God has given us a complete suit of armour for our protection, and even the sword of the Spirit to put us on the offensive.

You can read all about that provision in Ephesians Chapter 6:11-18.

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But we would be badly mistaken if we only looked on tribulation as a necessary evil.

The fact of the matter is, tribulation can be a very useful tool in the hands of God for our good.

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For instance, when His child kicks over the traces, God will use tribulation to put him or her back on the right path.

Hebrews 12:5-7 **"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."** If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

And you will notice the words . . . **"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD."**

That's important because your attitude will determine the success or failure of God's discipline.

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Tribulation can also occur when the child of God is on the *right* path.

Remember the time when Jesus fed the 5000?  
He commanded His disciples to take ship and go  
to the other side, didn't He?  
And that little piece of obedience got them  
into the worst storm of their lives!  
So, what was that all about?  
Well, Peter had his own idea what that was all  
about.  
He saw this seemingly life-threatening  
situation as an opportunity to go where he  
had never gone before.  
Now, he didn't get very far, did he?  
And we can't miss the disappointment in Jesus'  
voice when He said . . . **"O you of little  
faith, why did you doubt?"**  
But when the storm was over—and they were  
safely on the other shore—Peter was the  
only disciple who had walked on water!  
There's a lesson here, isn't there?  
Rather than a negative force to be avoided,  
tribulation can be an opportunity to go  
where you have *never gone* before.

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So, when you get to the point where you think you are totally unprepared for this kind of trauma—remember—this kind of trauma has been **prepared** for you.

And . . . **"God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."**

So . . . **"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-4**

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Let's encourage one another to follow our heavenly Joshua into the battles and into the trauma and into the victory that belong to the *promised land*.

**"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other**



**created thing, shall be able to separate  
from the love of God which is in Christ  
Jesus our Lord."**

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In closing, I would like to take a few moments to tell you about Verna Millson, a dear friend of ours whom we visited at her apartment in Kingston on our way back from holidays. For those of you who may not remember Ron and Verna, their daughter Susan married Robert Martin, the son of Herman and Minerva Martin, and they are engaged in prison ministry in the Kingston area.

When I was a young Christian, Ron and I worked at Canadian Westinghouse, London. At noon hours, Ron mentored me in the things of the Lord, and we have been good friends ever since.

And can you believe it?

About 62 years ago, Verna was Eleanor's bridesmaid, and Ron was my best man at our wedding.

We sort of lost close contact with them when they were commissioned—I believe it was by the Guelph Assembly—to build Wildwood Bible Camp near Chapleau. Ron also built a nursing home.

Verna is now a widow. Ron passed into the presence of his Lord in January of 2022.

We had only planned on a short visit, but Verna said *Please come for dinner. I'd love to have your company around the table.*

To our surprise, rather than a small lunch, Verna prepared a delicious roast beef dinner with all the trimmings in honour of our anniversary the following day.

She also gave us this book, "Every day with Jesus" by David Jeremiah.

As the Lord would have it, David's introduction to his book makes a perfect conclusion to what we have been considering this morning.

Let me share it with you:

“I’m tempted to open this little book by saying: ‘Welcome to another uncertain year!’

The last couple of years have been difficult, and the next 12 months are full of unpredictable events.

People everywhere are on edge.

But I don’t feel *uncertain* or *on edge*, and neither should you.

So instead, I’m going to say: Welcome to a *certain* year!”

I’m *certain* Jesus is in charge.

I’m *certain* His Word will sustain us, His Spirit will revive us, His angels will watch over us, and His plans will unfold as He has decreed them.

The Lord’s promises are as *certain* as His character, and His presence is as sure as sunshine.

I’m persuaded nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord—not for a day, not for a moment.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow us, not just every day, but every minute.

None of us are immune from stress and tension, but when we know how to walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, we’re in the best possible place.

The prophet Isaiah said, “*The Lord . . . He awakens Me morning by morning.*

*He awakens My ear to hear*” (Isaiah 50:4).

In this way we’re “renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Let's live every single day this year *with* Jesus, *for* Jesus, and *like* Jesus.

I'm not going to tell you how many days I've been on this earth—I had a significant birthdate last year—but from a lifetime of experience, I can tell you the song I learned in childhood is true: *Every day with Jesus is better than the day before!*

And of that, I'm *certain!*"

David Jeremiah