

Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

When God Takes Down His House

What do you do when God decides to take down His own work? What do you do when things you have believed in, trusted in, committed yourself to, worked like the devil and sacrificed everything for, are completely shattered, not by the devil, but by God Himself?

No, I am not talking about this or that church splitting or falling apart. Nor am I dealing in speculation. I am dealing in known events that are well documented and pretty well understood. It has happened.

Walk back with me to another place and time. It is late in the seventh century BC. The place is the gate where cases were heard in the law, where deals were finalized and witnessed, where news was announced, and even sermons delivered. A very young man was standing there ready to speak. Over his shoulder we can look up and see the most famous building in the world at the time – The Temple of the Lord, built by Solomon with no effort spared to glorify God.

Solomon's Temple was legendary, not only in its beauty but in the events that marked its history. You could ask any of the old men seated near the gate and hear the whole story – how David had the concept, how Solomon inherited the job, all the material that went into

the building, all the years it was under construction and, greatest of all, the staggering, incredible events of its dedication. They all know the story by heart. God Himself actually entered this building and filled it with smoke. That had never happened anywhere in the world, and it has never happened again.

This great Temple had been the center of their faith for over 330 years. It had been the hub of millions of camping pilgrims at over 330 years of Feasts of Tabernacles. It had been the center of the worship of Yehovah for generation after generation. It stood there looking as permanent as the mountains around. It was the very heart of their faith, the symbol of their God, the rock around which all Israel gathered. It was the very *work of God*, God's own house. And it was doomed!

The young man standing there to speak is no newcomer. He has been there many times before. He

is a preacher of righteousness, one who condemns sin and corruption, and warns of the anger of God for all these things. Among the things that concerned him was not only the corruption of worship in this place, but injustice that was happening day after day in their courts.

The young man's name is Jeremiah, and he had been preaching to the Jews there for a very long time. Day after day, Jeremiah had gone to the courthouse steps and preached against the sin and corruption of the religious leadership, and of the people. He had enumerated their sins, he had cited the laws broken, he had railed against the idolatry.

To us, reading the Bible 2700 years later, Jeremiah is a giant. But at the time, hardly anyone paid him any heed at all. Perhaps the most surprising thing is the reason why they didn't listen. The people did not respond to Jeremiah's preaching because they could look over his shoulder and see the Temple.

There it stood, gleaming in the sunlight, the very symbol of God and His righteousness. "It is just not

continued on page 2. . .

Make a Difference!

If you're currently looking for new ministry opportunities, consider helping CEM and the *Born to Win* broadcast. Among our greatest financial challenges are large broadcasting expenses. Every dollar helps in getting the Gospel out. We invite you to share in this growing ministry. Your tax deductible donations can make a real difference!

*When God Takes Down His House
continued from page 1 . . .*

possible for Jeremiah to be right about this,” they thought. “I worship God here. I pray here, I offer sacrifices here. I’m okay. If I stay close to the Temple, I’ll be okay. I will be safe there. God will never allow anything to happen to His Temple.”

The Temple conveyed a false sense of security to the people. In a strange way, even the Temple had become an idol. And so God had Jeremiah address this issue head on. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,” cried Jeremiah, “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.” It is a good message, calling for repentance.

But then he adds this: “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.” I can almost see Jeremiah swinging his arm from left to right pointing at buildings in the Temple complex, emphasizing his words. This building, he said, is not going to save you, here is what you have to do:

“Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. *For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever*” (Jeremiah 7:4-7).

It is shocking, even in the modern world, how many people think that if you just go through the motions of religion, it doesn’t matter what you do with the rest of your

life. But the words of Jeremiah should send a chill down the spine:

“Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.”

Jesus Himself would later cite this passage when He ran the bandits out of the Temple. But Jeremiah wasn’t finished. “If you want to know what this means,” he said, go to Shiloh. God’s house had been there before it was in Jerusalem. “Go to Shiloh, he said, and see what God did to it for all the wickedness of the people.” Don’t think for a moment that God won’t do it again.

I’m not going to ask what you should do when you hear Jeremiah say these things. Everyone knows you should repent when you hear a sermon like this. What I am asking is this: What do you do when God has taken down His own work? It happened to Jeremiah. The Temple and its environs were destroyed and left in ruins.

There is one thing you do *not* do, because it is pointless. You do not try to rebuild what God is taking down. You keep on doing what you know is right. You keep the faith. You keep your head down and stay out from under. You make the best you can of what God has given you. And you wait for His next move, realizing this: It may be a long wait.

We don’t know with any certainty what happened to

Jeremiah. We know that he was in the city at the fall of the Temple. We know he was well treated. We know he finally went to Egypt, of all places, with a band of refugees. After that, we have nothing but legend.

We know what happened to Daniel, and it is instructive in some important ways. Daniel kept the faith in the face of all kinds of adverse pressures. In one of the truly great prayers of the Bible he acknowledged that God was just in what He had done. What may be surprising is that Daniel rose to the very highest levels of government in *Babylon*. Mind you, this was the real and original Babylon, not a cheap imitation. This was the root and branch of every kind of paganism.

Nevertheless, Daniel participated in and practically ran, the government of Babylon at one point in his life. And at all times and in all circumstances, Daniel kept the faith.

There was another man, one who had not been born when the Temple fell. Born in captivity, he still kept the faith. He was the king’s wine steward in Babylon, and his name was Nehemiah. He ended up returning to Jerusalem, rebuilding the wall, and laying the groundwork for the rebuilding of the Temple. But there was nothing this great man could have done until it was God’s time to move. And he could easily have failed had he been a lesser man.

Now, looking back over the generations of time, we can take a lot of valuable lessons from what happened here, even if this were the end of the story. But it is not. This was not the last time that God would become displeased with His house and would take it down.

continued on page 3 . . .

*When God Takes Down His House
continued from page 2 . . .*

Jesus must have shocked His disciples. On one occasion they were pointing to the Temple buildings as Jeremiah had and He said, “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:1-2 KJV).

The building was already doomed. It was only necessary to wait for the right moment to take it down. But Jesus foreshadowed this at a strange time and place. He was in Samaria, speaking to a woman at a well. “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet,” she said. “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (John 4:19-23 KJV).

“Woman, believe me,” replied Jesus, “the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . But the hour cometh, and *now is*, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

Note well, “the hour comes and now is.” Through all the days while the Book of Acts was being written the Temple sat there honored by the disciples and revered by everyone. It stood there for another 40 years. For a long time, not much was different. They went up to the Temple to pray regularly. Apparently some even offered sacrifices. The die was already cast – its fate was already sealed. The Temple was no longer the place to worship. So what were the disciples to do?

The Book of Acts is a story of doors opened, doors closed, and of men and women going about the task of doing what Jesus said they should do. By the time the Temple fell, most

of the Christian church was nowhere near Jerusalem. Only a handful were still there when Jerusalem was encompassed with armies.

Truth to tell, the fall of the Temple may well have been predicated precisely for the same reason as the first fall. It had become a kind of idol – a substitute for doing what God’s servants were expected to do. One of the ways Jesus ensured the survival of the church was by making sure it was not dependent on the Temple, and that the church was not there when the Temple fell.

I have little doubt that the fall of the Temple was terribly disorienting to the early Jewish Christians. But they carried on, in much the same way as they had throughout the Book of Acts. And I suppose we could ask ourselves the same question they asked. What do we do next, when God takes down His own work? Like the men and women of the Book of Acts, we face challenges, and overcome them. Doors are closed in our faces, and we try other doors. Doors are opened before us and we walk through them. We have opportunities and we grasp them.

Where will it finally lead? God only knows. And only God knows

how the efforts of widely separated saints create results that only He can see, only He can tabulate. None of us knows the end from the beginning. I certainly don’t. Paul didn’t either.

I have no idea where I am going or what the next year holds. I do know what I have to do today. I know what doors are open to me tomorrow. Sometimes, that just has to be enough. We walk by faith, not by sight. But I will confess one thing. I can hardly wait to see what lies around the next bend.

Watching and waiting for God’s direction,

Ronald L. Dart

P.S. For a sermon on this same topic, “When God Takes Down His House,” with much more information, just check the box on the enclosed card and return it to us in the envelope provided. It is an important theme, and the tape is *FREE* because of the gifts of those who faithfully support CEM, so don’t hesitate. And if you are listening to the *Born to Win* program, let us know what station you listen to. It is important, because that tells us what stations we keep and which we let go.

Praise the Lord in Music! *By Brent Kern*

When I became Festival Music Director, my goal was to improve our program every year. So far, I feel that goal has been met. To continue to meet it, I need your help. I want every person attending CEM’s Feast site to feel fulfilled and proud they were a part of this year’s music program. During song service I see many talented people in the congregation who could be helping our music team. A CEM survey showed we’re blessed with an abundant supply of talented musicians. I plan on using these talents to make the Festival music program even better. Originally I planned to put an orchestra together for this Feast, but it will have to wait until 2006.

There is nothing like voices coming together and producing a beautiful sound for the Lord. Please consider joining the 2005 Feast choir and bringing others with you. Let’s make this a Feast of musical memories.

Passover News

The Mini-Feast held in Destin, Florida was most encouraging and uplifting to those who attended and the small church in that area. Shirley George writes: "There were 58 that took Passover and more came in on Saturday and some others on Sunday. We counted 80 that attended at least one day. . . We had at least 10 people in attendance for the first time. They just heard the broadcast and decided they wanted to learn more, so they drove several hundred miles to hear Ron."

The lessons we learn in small churches at Passover we might not learn in larger ones. As it turned out, only one man took the Passover in the Durango church, and he was the minister. Since it's important to learn humility at any age, Mr. Bill Jacobs invited all of those who had not yet been baptized to participate in the foot-washing service. So, for the first time, teens and others who hadn't been baptized participated in this part of the New Testament Passover service.

While a grandmother was washing a lady's feet at the Tyler Church of God, Rebekah asked that her feet be washed. Her grandmother took off the little girl's shoes, washed and dried her feet, and put her shoes back on with many smiling faces looking on. Rebekah has been attending YEA Sabbath School classes and her mother diligently teaches her the Bible at home. At four years old, Rebekah understands the importance of obeying God.

Have You Made Your Feast Plans?

By Skip Martin

It's time to make plans to attend the CEM Feast of Tabernacles at Destin/Ft. Walton Beach, FL. Yes, we plan to be back on the beach for the Feast this year.

Plans were changed by the hurricane last year, and we spent a wonderful Feast in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. The Ozarks were an experience for many "city dwellers" who attended, but it's time to get back to the beach where so many Feast-goers feel at home.

Our song service will be led by Brent Kern, who brings energy and talent to the Worship Service. We will have YEA classes for kids ages three through 15 and seminars for the 16-19 age group. Almost daily, we will have educational, inspiring seminars for the older kids (OK, us old folks). Another great Youth Day is planned, where no "old people" will be involved. . . only our youth. The Worship Service will have such speakers as Bill Jacobs, Guy Swenson, Jim O'Brien, Larry Watkins, and of course, Ron Dart. We will have many activities headlined by the world famous Pie and Ice Cream Social. Also, we're bringing some of the Arkansas Ozarks music to the beach for the Family Dance.

So, make your plans soon to join us at beautiful Destin/Ft. Walton Beach in praise and worship of our Father and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calendar of Events

Family Bible Retreat, Memorial Day Weekend

- Join us at the Bel Arco Resort in Bull Shoals, AR starting at 7 p.m. May 27th through noon May 30th. All you weary travelers come on over to the Town Hall at 7 p.m., or whenever you arrive. We'll have sandwiches, finger foods, and drinks ready. The night is designed to set the atmosphere for Christian renewal. Seminars begin at 9 Sabbath morning, and YEA classes and seminars (for the Senior Teens) begin at 10 a.m. Ronald Dart will bring a thought provoking sermon at 2 p.m. Brent Kern will treat us with his lyrical baritone voice in concert at 7 p.m., followed by a pie and ice cream social with games.

Sunday at 9 a.m. seminars will begin and YEA classes will be held again at 10 a.m. From 12:30 to 3 p.m. there will be a delightful Tropical Pool Party for the kids with pizza, punch, pool games, a craft and FUN! Come join the group. Larry Watkins will lead a canoe float trip down the Buffalo National River Sunday afternoon. It will be awesome! Then CEM wants to treat you to a hamburger cookout in the pavilion beginning at 6 p.m. Sunday evening. Monday morning there will be more Seminars and YEA classes and we'll let you get on your way home at noon. For accommodations call Larry Watkins at 1-888-BIBLE 44. We're looking forward to seeing your smiling face!

Meet the Teacher, Columbia, South Carolina

Join us July 30th at 2 p.m. at the Embassy Suites, Greystone Blvd. and I-20 in Columbia, SC for an inspirational and educational session with the teacher, Ronald L. Dart. For additional information call Ralph Hanahan at 803-732-7869, or CEM at 1-888-BIBLE 44 or e-mail lsw@cemnetwork.com.

Christian Educational Ministries



Post Office Box 560
Whitehouse, Texas 75791
phone: 1-888-BIBLE-44
fax: 903.509.1139

e-mail: adm@cemnetwork.com
website: www.cemnetwork.com

*That the man of God may be proficient
and equipped for every good work.*