

The Lion of Judah

From Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. It's been noted that that lion is not tame. That being the case, what have we made of Jesus the Christ? It is true that Jesus is the Lamb of God, but that is only for the purpose of dying. The risen Christ is once again the Lion, and he has not been tamed.

We're nearing the end of the age of "relevant Christianity." The older generation has been in a long chase after something they call relevance. They say, our youth are into rock and roll, so let's do Christian rock. Christianity should be made relevant to the younger generation. What were the churchmen who led in this effort thinking about? The Apostle Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

It's a good thing for a church to get the kids off the streets, but is that all the church is called to do—that you are called to do? This came into

sharp focus a few years ago with a TV documentary, "The Lost Children of Rockdale County." Teenagers in a small community in Alabama gathered on weekend nights to participate in sexual orgies with multiple partners. Another scene showed some of the kids in church, clapping their hands and dancing to Christian rock. But reality began to set in when the Christian rock music didn't save them from syphilis.

The newest generation may be waking up to the emptiness of their lives, and they are hungry for God. They are tired of the thin gruel served up in most churches. Many are

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ready for some meat. A meal with nothing but dessert doesn't satisfy for long.

To the wounded, the sick, the afflicted who turn to Christ, he is indeed gentle. But to those who are whole, he presents a different face.

Jesus is a whole man and very God. He is demanding. He is confrontational. He is even dangerous.

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Making Good Sense of Our Dollars . . .

In these days of skyrocketing inflation, do you have money laid up for your children and grandchildren when you leave this world? You may answer, those kids will have to take care of themselves; my pocket-book seems to be a bag with holes in it. Are you having trouble making ends meet—paying your bills each month?

Inflation has reared its ugly head for all of us. It's not fun, and most of us have found it very wearisome that our children may have to live with a lower standard of living than we have become accustomed to. Did you know that there are laws in the Bible that, if kept, will insure your kids will not have to live in poverty? There are also laws in the Bible that, if kept, will insure you have plenty as well. You need this *FREE* booklet, *The Lost Keys to Financial Security*, by Ronald L. Dart. Write or call for it today at 1-888-BIBLE-44.

Spiritual Heart Disease

By Hugh Buchanan

You won't find mention of this ailment in a medical journal. The AMA knows nothing about it. Your doctor can't detect or treat it. The book that describes this malady is the Bible. It is much more common and deadly than coronary disease. It must be diagnosed and treated, for if it is not treated, it can end the Christian's hope of eternal life. The disease itself is referred to as "Hardness of Heart."

We must first understand that when the Bible refers to the heart, it is usually a figure of speech, metonymy, to indicate the seat of emotion and intellect, the innermost nature of a man, and not the organ itself.

God has much to say about the human heart and the diseased state characterized by its hardening. The Pharaoh of the Exodus may be the quintessential example of hardness of heart (Exodus 4:21). In Exodus it says 11 times that God hardened his heart. It says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart three times, and five times it simply says that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. I don't want to focus on who did the hardening, but rather, what was the effect of this condition on Pharaoh.

Today, we use the expression, "hard-hearted" to describe a person who cannot be touched by compassion, pity, or mercy. The biblical meaning is quite different. Keep this in mind as we study what the Bible has to say about it. When the Old Testament talks about hardness of heart, the Hebrew means "slow or thick." As one studies all the Scriptures about hardness of heart, the meaning becomes clear: It is the spiritual condition characterized by these attributes:

- Insensitivity to the spiritual aspect of life
- Insensitivity to the potential of spirit involvement in the physical realm
- Failure to "consider" the spiritual as well as the physical
- "Spiritual stupidity" (Hebrew, *kabed* = heavy, slow, thick)
- Related to unbelief
- Inability to see God's interaction or connection with a process or event
- Inability to process mentally the spiritual component of experiences
- A spiritual disease which can and does affect Christians.

The result of this "spiritual stupidity" is shown in Pharaoh's inability to grasp what was happening around him: Because his heart was hardened, Pharaoh could not perceive what was perfectly clear to everyone else. He was unable to process mentally the miraculous events that were destroying his kingdom. He could not discern this to be the work of God, although those in his court had done so (Exodus 8:19). The inability to perceive the presence and protection of God toward Israel was ultimately the death of Pharaoh and his army (Exodus 14:8-9, 17-18).

Sadly, the Israelites who benefited from Pharaoh's hardness of heart suffered from the same disease. They were unable to process spiritually the meaning of their escape from captivity and the divine protection they enjoyed during the trek through the Sinai desert. The author of Hebrews points to their hardness of heart and warns us that we can contract the disease too. "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your

hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways" (Hebrews 3:7-10).

There are four warnings in Hebrews to Christians about hardness of heart. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13). Habitual sinning causes us to become inured to the spiritual component of life. We lose spiritual perception and become insensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This Scripture tells us that hardness of heart is connected to unbelief. Hebrews 3:15-19 reinforces these principles and that hardness of heart caused the Israelites to be denied entrance into the Promised Land (Hebrews 3:11). The implication is that hardness of heart and unbelief can keep us out of the Kingdom of God.

The final warning is: "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 4:6-7). Clearly, this is a disease that was not eradicated when the new covenant arrived. It is a continuing risk for today's Christian.

Examples of hardness of heart in

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Being close to Jesus can get you killed. He warned people who came to him that they should count the cost. "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" (Luke 14:25-28).

The generation now passing strove to make Jesus relevant to the times. Even to make Jesus easy. That was a terrible mistake. Jesus is what he is, who he is. People do not need Jesus made into the mundane. They have more than enough of that already. They need to encounter *The Lion of Judah*.

An important and wealthy man came to Jesus one day with a question. "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast,

and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:16-22).

Counting the cost, for this man, suddenly became relevant Christianity. Jesus could be very demanding. And he could also be confrontational. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed, but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you" (John 8:31-37).

Did you catch this disconnect? John starts out by telling us that Jesus spoke these words to those who believed, but these now do not fall in that category. Were they interjected into the conversation right after the first words to the believing disciples? Jesus continued in verse 45-47: "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

This is a theme Jesus developed elsewhere. Those who believed the written word of Moses and the

prophets tended to believe Jesus because he was consistent with them. But those who merely practiced Judaism without that commitment to the Scripture had big problems. You will hear on this *FREE Born to Win* program, *The Lion of Judah*, how Abraham began to loom large in the discussion and how the people who heard these words understood them. How did they take Jesus' meaning? This is most important because it establishes that Christ existed before Abraham and Abraham saw him. It also illustrates that Jesus could be confrontational and how it was dangerous to be Christ's disciple.

The Lion of Judah is not a tame lion. But God did not call you to make your life easier, less demanding. He called you to send you into harm's way. To make very large demands of you. In *The Lion of Judah*, Ron Dart expounds a most important concept that will make a difference in your Christian life.

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

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the New Testament indicate that its symptoms include the inability to hear, see, remember, and draw correct conclusions about our experiences as they relate to the spirit realm. The disciples suffered from it: "And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat" (Matthew 14:15-16). Christ never made a frivolous or pointless statement. I believe he expected the disciples to be able to provide a meal for these people.

The disciples pointed out, "We have here but five loaves, and two fishes" (Matthew 14:17); but they missed the point. Christ must have given them some training or information they could have used to produce food miraculously. They tried to solve the problem using physical resources only. Christ did not press the point, having perceived that the disciples were not going to understand. "He said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children" (Matthew 14:18-21).

It took the disciples a long time to overcome their spiritual dullness. They

took much criticism from Christ for this failing. Jesus was generally patient with sinners, save for hypocrisy. Another human characteristic that angered him was hardness of heart.

We can all identify with the disciples' problem. Hardness of heart is the condition of the natural man. It is the carnal response to an encounter with the spiritual realm or spiritual principles. The natural mind is spiritually obtuse, incapable of spiritual perception and thought (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Christ reproved the disciples for spiritual dullness. Would he reprove us? Have we ever been spiritually dull? Have we ever suffered from unbelief or lack of faith? Have we ever been oblivious to the spiritual overtones of events around us?

One cause for hardness of heart is the lack of the Holy Spirit working in the mind. Another is sin and the failure to repent. Proverbs tells us that a lack of respect for God can cause it, too. "Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief" (Proverbs 28:14). We might interpret this to include the failure to take God seriously or failure to take him at his word or believe his Word. The disciples had hardness of heart when they failed to consider, to meditate on, to analyze, to put together the miraculous things they witnessed. Those are the causes of spiritual heart disease. Here is a list of the symptoms of spiritual heart disease:

- Blocked faith
- Fear
- Inability to understand spiritual principles or events
- Exclusive focus on the physical realm; looking only for physical solutions
- Unbelief; inability to see God

- Inability to believe in and trust the Word of God.

The prescription? Get involved in activities that increase spiritual perception and understanding. First, have an active prayer life. Be in communication with God, asking Him for the spirit of understanding. We must have our natural minds enhanced by the spirit of God as is pointed out in 2 Corinthians 2. God will give his spirit to those who come to him in prayer and ask for it (Matthew 7:11).

Next, study God's Word. Be familiar with spiritual concepts and principles. Read and understand about God's power and abilities. Faith is strengthened by immersion in the Scriptures (Romans 10:17).

Occasionally, we must fast to draw close to God and draw back from the physical realm. Things we can perceive are more convincing to us than the spiritual realm which has no impact on our sight, hearing, and sense of touch. Fasting focuses our minds on the spiritual realm, while abstaining from the physical things that consume our attention.

Ask God for spiritual perception to help "put it together." Ask for a heart touched by repentance (Psalm 51:16-17). A heart hardened by sin cannot be broken. A heart softened and broken by repentance is a gift from God (Romans 2:4-5). To have living faith and belief, to be able to perceive God and understand the spiritual import of the events of our lives, we must have pure hearts, not hardened ones (Matthew 5:8).

Periodically, we have a physical exam to determine the state of our physical health. Christians must do a spiritual self-exam to determine if spiritual hardening of the heart is a threat. If you have the symptoms, take the cure!