

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## STANDING “IN THE GAP”

By Bobby Witherington

***“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one” (Ezek. 22:30).***

Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet, one who labored during the 70-year Babylonian captivity of the people of Judah. He was carried to Babylon during the reign of King Jehoiachin, which occurred around 597 B.C., (Ezek. 1:1-3; 2 Kings 24:15). Actually, there were three stages of the captivity of Judah, the first occurring during the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1; Dan. 1:1), or around 606 B.C., the second during the reign of Jehoiachin, and the third stage occurring during the reign of Zedekiah (2 Kings 25; 2 Chron. 36), or around 586 B.C.

Reactions among the Jews taken captive to Babylon were mixed. Removed from their land, some ***“by the rivers of Babylon...sat down,”*** and ***“wept,”*** as they ***“remembered Zion,”*** and could not bring themselves to ***“sing the Lord’s song in a strange land”*** (Psa. 137:1, 4). Others, however, continued in their wicked ways. These were the ones addressed in our opening text (Ezek. 22:30). Many of the captive Jews addressed by Ezekiel had delusions of a speedy deliverance, notwithstanding the fact that Jeremiah, by inspiration, declared that this captivity would last seventy long years (Jer. 25:11; 29:10).

God’s law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7), applies to nations as well as to individuals. Scripture states that ***“righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people”*** (Prov. 14:34). Judah, during the time of Ezekiel, was a prime example of a ***“people”*** to whom ***“sin is a reproach.”*** This fact is clearly shown in chapter 22 of Ezekiel. Please note: The people had defiled themselves with ***“idols”*** (v. 4); the people ***“made light of father and mother”*** (v. 7); they had ***“profaned”*** the Sabbaths (v. 8); they were guilty of incest (v. 10); they took ***“bribes to shed blood”*** (v. 12). The ***“profit”*** they made was ***“dishonest”*** (v.13); their priests ***“violated”*** God’s ***“law,”*** and ***“profaned”*** His ***“holy things”*** (v. 26); their ***“princes”*** (rulers) were likened to ***“wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood”*** (v. 27); their ***“prophets”*** were ***“seeing false visions and divining lies”*** (v. 28), and ***“the people of the land used oppression, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and...wrongfully”*** oppressed ***“the stranger”*** (v. 29).

Such was the moral and spiritual condition of the people during the time of Ezekiel. Hence, God, through Ezekiel, said, ***“I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one,”*** (Ezek. 22:30). What a sad commentary on a people whom God had chosen, and to whom He gave the law of Moses! God sought for a man who would ***“stand in the gap,”*** but He ***“found no one!”***

A ***“gap”*** is a broken place, or an opening. Ancient cities were often fortified by walls, which protected the people from invading enemies. However, if a ***“gap”*** or a ***“breach”*** occurred in the wall, the enemy could invade and conquer the people. Having grown up on a farm, I well remember what cows did when there was a ***“gap”*** or a ***“breach”*** in the fence; they would get out of the fenced enclosure, sometimes even to their own detriment.

The ***“gap”*** mentioned in our text was moral and spiritual; it was not physical or material. Because of idolatry, immorality, rebellion, etc., the people had long since removed themselves from God; therefore, God said, ***“I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads...”*** (Ezek. 22:31).

Think of the difference which could have been made if there had been enough righteous people to ***“stand in the gap!”*** Illustrating this point, we cite the example of the children of Israel during the time of Moses. While he was in the mount receiving the ***“tablets of stone,”*** the people approached his brother, Aaron, and said ***“make us gods that shall go before us,”*** and Aaron responded by making the ***“molded calf,”*** building an ***“altar before it,”*** and the people began to worship and make sacrifice to this object of their own making (Ex. 31:18-32:8). God was more than a little displeased! In fact, God even threatened to ***“consume”*** the people and make of Moses ***“a great nation.”*** However, Moses interceded in prayer on behalf of the people and ***“the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to the people”*** (Ex. 32:10-14). On that occasion, Moses stood ***“in the gap!”*** Centuries later, alluding to this very incident, the Psalmist said, ***“Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach”*** (Psa. 106:23).

Springing forward over three millennia, we come to America in the year 2024. Morally and spiritually, our nation is in shambles. Every day, thousands of innocent babies, while still in the wombs of their mothers, are ruthlessly slaughtered by means of abortion. And you and I, through our taxes, are helping to subsidize this ungodly slaughter of innocent lives. Those who speak out against adulterous marriages, homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism, same sex marriage, etc. are labeled and libeled as homophobic, misguided, uninformed, bigoted, intolerant hate mongers. This reminds us of the people during the time of Isaiah, a people who called ***“evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter”*** (Isa. 5:20). Indeed, we need more and more people who will step forward, and boldly ***“stand in the gap!”***

### ***“STAND IN THE GAP” BETWEEN WHAT?***

**BETWEEN TRUTH AND ERROR!** Jesus said ***“you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”*** (John 8:32). Jesus also affirmed that God’s ***“word is truth”*** (John 17:17). However, we are living in an age in which multitudes claim it doesn’t make any difference what a person believes so long he is sincere, apparently not realizing that those who do ***“not believe the truth”*** will ***“be condemned”*** (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

**BETWEEN MORALITY AND IMMORALITY.** Those who engage in ***“the works of the flesh,”*** according to the Bible, ***“will not inherit the kingdom of God”*** (Gal. 5:19-21). Morality has been likened to a wall that shields a people from divine wrath. We must be ready to ***“stand in the gap”*** and do what we can to prevent our nation’s slide into moral collapse and its most undesirable consequences.

**BETWEEN COMMITMENT AND COMPROMISE.** True commitment urges us to be ***“faithful unto death”*** (Rev. 2:10), to ***“fight the good fight of faith”*** (1 Tim. 6:12), and to ***“stand against the wiles of the devil”*** (Eph. 6:11). Compromise results in loose living, moral bankruptcy, and religious apostasy. Let us be ready to ***“stand in the gap”*** and never ***“give place to the devil”*** (Eph. 4:27).

**BETWEEN THE SAVED AND THE LOST.** Jesus said: ***“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”*** (Matt. 7:13-14). Notwithstanding the doctrine of Universalism, and the belief that all sincere religious people are going to heaven, the Bible teaches the very opposite! Regarding the way that ***“leads to life,”*** Jesus said, ***“there are few who find it.”*** But if we are true Christians, we should understand that the Lord wants us to help people ***“find it,”*** as it relates to the way that ***“leads to life.”*** Too many of us, in practice, are turning the ***“great commission”*** (Mark 16:15) into the great ***“omission!”*** Paul charged Timothy to ***“commit”*** the truths he had been taught ***“to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”*** (2 Tim. 2:2). We must be ***“ready to give a defense to everyone who asks”*** us ***“a reason for the hope”*** that is in us, and we must do it ***“with meekness and fear”*** (1 Pet. 3:15). Regarding the saved and the lost, we must be ready to ***“stand in the gap!”***

**CONCLUSION:** Other applications could be made with regards to the importance of God’s people being ready to ***“stand in the gap.”*** Yes, we must be ready to thus ***“stand,”*** and I assure you that this, beloved, involves much more than merely sitting in the pew! ■

**Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM**

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