

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#06-1201

2012: Who has Stood in the Council of the Lord?

January 1, 2012

(16) Thus says the LORD of hosts, "**Do not listen** to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak **a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD.** (17) "**They keep saying** to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "**You will have peace**"; and as for everyone who walks in the **stubbornness of his own heart**, they say, '**Calamity will not come upon you.**' (18) "**But who has stood in the council of the LORD, that he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?** (19) "Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone forth in wrath, even a whirling tempest; it will swirl down on the head of the wicked. (20) "The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart; **in the last days** you will clearly understand it. (Jeremiah 23:16-20 NASB)

Each year I ask the Lord for a word for the year, and He has faithfully given me one; at times, He has even given me two words. This year is no different, for there are two words that He has put on my heart for 2012. This issue and the next cover the first word; the second word follows.

As an introduction to what the Lord has laid upon my heart, I have come to realize that the Lord has gifted the members of His body in a variety of ways. Some are gifted to see the positives that are happening in the body of Christ and others are gifted to be the watchmen who are continually sounding the danger alarm or at least the cautionary alarm that things may not be as they seem and we need to be watchful. It is the Lord's way of keeping us in balance with Him and not veering off solely in one direction.

I fall within this last group, at least part of the time, not all of the time. In fact, I have a third word, which is one of encouragement that perhaps is the Lord's third word for the year. This will be shared in a separate issue.

Now, this leads to the above verses, in particular, to verse 18, which is the specific word given to me by the Lord: "**But who has stood in the council of the LORD, that he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?**

The first thing to note is that the Lord asked a question through Jeremiah that deals with seeing and hearing and heeding His word. But the key to this verse is in the first part of the question: Who has stood in the council of the Lord?

Some background is in order. Jeremiah was raised up during the period when the houses of Israel and Judah had grossly and profanely turned from the Lord. As you may recall, Solomon's United Kingdom of Israel was split into two kingdoms, Judah (holder of the scepter, representative of the King) and Israel (holder of the birthright, representative of the Kingdom), because Solomon's heart had turned from the Lord (1 Kings 11:9-11). Over 300 years later, Jeremiah was raised up to speak to Judah as they were about to enter into an iron-yoke judgment in 604 BC at the hands of the Babylonians. Israel had already entered into their iron-yoke judgment in 745-721 BC at the hands of the Assyrians.

Jeremiah 23 speaks encouragement and warning. The encouragement was the fact that God was going to raise up for David **a righteous Branch**, namely, the Lord Jesus, "**the Lord our righteousness,**" as well as shepherds to tend His flock. God's Branch will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness. Praise God!

However, most of the chapter is directed to the many false prophets that had arisen in both Israel and Judah. The land had become full of adulterers who were walking in falsehood. Even the prophets and the priests had become polluted. The prophets were accused of speaking "a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord." They were saying "Peace" and "Calamity will not come upon you." It is in this context that the question was asked.

Apart from Jeremiah and like-minded prophets, there was no one among the so-called prophets that was standing in the council of the Lord to see, hear, and heed His word. Simply, no one was standing in the council of the Lord to receive and know His word. If they had, they would have known their true condition before the Lord instead of living according to the lie that they were God's chosen and could get away with all sorts of abominations and the Lord would not see it or care about it.

This raises the question: What does this have to do with us today? Surely, the Lord's people are not worshipping Baal as ancient Israel did. Further, we are living in the day which was spoken of through the prophets that the Lord's people would prophesy and be given visions and dreams (Acts 2:17). Yet even further, one could argue that the world and the church are being bombarded with God's word through all sorts of media. In fact, there seems to be no lack for the word of the Lord going forth to believers and unbelievers. To be clear, there is much good in all of this, as well as some bad.

However, this is not the heart of the question posed in Jeremiah 23:18. It is not simply referring to speaking forth the written word of God known to us as the Bible or relaying dreams and visions, which, by the way, can be susceptible to all sorts of subjectivity, even deception. It is speaking to the very heart of the Lord. What is on His heart for this very day and hour? What is His council to us today?

This leads to the word *council* or *counsel*, which comes from the Hebrew word *sod*. According to Strong's Concordance, *sod* (H5475) refers to "a session, that is, company of persons (in close deliberation); by implication intimacy, consultation, a secret." *Sod* comes from the primitive root word *yasad* (H3245), which means "to set (literally or figuratively); intensively to found; reflexively to sit down together, that is, settle, consult." Interestingly, Webster's English Dictionary states that an archaic meaning is "wisdom; shrewd judgment," and an obsolete meaning is "a confidential idea, plan; a secret."

In light of Jeremiah, the implication is that one is drawn into **intimacy** with the Lord to know the secrets of His heart, to know His plan, to receive His wisdom, His thoughts, His judgment of things on earth. It implies coming into the secret chamber of the Lord's heart. Mind you, this is not an exclusive invitation as if it were only for a few select people of God. In his discourse with his friends, Job was questioned by Eliphaz on this very ground: **"Do you hear the secret counsel [sod] of God, and limit wisdom to yourself?** (Job 15:8). No; this is for all who desire to hear His voice (word) and to heed it. **"The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant"** (Psalm 25:14).

We all need to be drawn into intimacy with the Lord to hear the voice of the love of our life and to share His life and His thoughts with others. In contrast, given the evil of our day, we need hearts that cry out like David: **"Hide me from the secret counsel [sod] of evildoers, from the tumult of those who do iniquity"** (Psalm 64:2).

As I have meditated on this word, I have concluded that our day is not much different from Jeremiah's day. We are surrounded by many false prophets, both in the world and in the church. In the world, there are a countless number of false prophets; ones I would call **media prophets** that peddle their so-called "expert opinions, analyses, and predictions" through the many media outlets of our day. Just as Babylon was overrun by the Medes, so are we being overrun by the Media (play on words). In the church, there are so many voices purportedly speaking for the Lord, often speaking contrary to one another, but all claiming they are in conformance with the word of God, that it leaves one's head spinning. We are in captivity to Mystery Babylon and truly living in the day of Babel; that is, it is the day of confusion.

This brings us back to the word for 2012: **"But who has stood in the council of the LORD, that he should see and hear His word?"**

Dear beloved, I encourage you to seek with all your heart to stand in the council of the Lord.