

Lights Came On - cont.

In Matthew 4 Jesus had just endured his 40 days of temptation by Satan. John the Baptist had been arrested by Herod, and then Jesus moved from his hometown of Nazareth to the city of Capernaum. When recording Jesus' move, Matthew cited a prophecy from Isaiah 9:1-2 about this region seeing a great light. In the first century the northern region of Israel had the reputation of being "backwoods" by those who lived closer to Jerusalem in the south. Galilee was close to Gentile territory and to some degree was influenced by them. One commentator revealed, "Many Judean Jews were embarrassed by their country cousins and used the expression 'Galilee of the Gentiles' as a pejorative. Politically, spiritually and culturally the area and its people were stigmatized as being 'in the dark'" (*Chumbley, The Gospel of Matthew*). These people were missing something as they spiritually bumbled around, lacking divine illumination. What a powerful statement when Matthew describes them as "those living in the shadowland of death." Who wants to live in a land of death? Who wants to live in a land of constant darkness? (Anyone experiencing flashbacks to the plagues of Egypt?) But then, according to Matthew, Jesus moved into town and with him came light and life!

When the power finally came back on that evening a few weeks back, it was like the whole house came to life! Lights came on, appliances beeped, the A/C started and the refrigerator hummed. Without Jesus in

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our lives, we are like the land of Galilee or a house without power. We are spiritually dark and dead. Like those in Capernaum we need Jesus to "move in" to our lives and bring light and life with him. We need to see the great light of Jesus, we need his light to dawn in our lives!

- Jeremy Dehut -

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THE WARFIELD BULLETIN

October 11, 2020



For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Two Guest Articles by Jeremy Dehut

It's Not Always Good To Be A Diamond

*"They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the Lord of hosts."
- Zechariah 7:12 -*

There are several places in the Biblical text where the value of precious stones is used to communicate something of the value of heavenly things. Think of all the precious stones John saw in Revelation to describe the dazzling glory of being in God's presence (Rev. 4:1-3, 21:9-27). Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a pearl of great price worth more than anything else you may have (Matt. 13:45-46). Paul even compared some of the Christians he taught with precious material's ability to withstand the refining fire of judgment (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Even though the Bible mostly uses gemstones and other valuables to hint at the worth of heavenly things, in Zechariah 7, the comparison is negative. The density of diamonds is compared to how impervious some people can make their hearts toward God.

To the post-exilic Jews, Zechariah offered a warning to avoid the mistakes of their ancestors and instead listen to the instruction of God. However, the people

would repeat the attitude and actions of their forefathers. Zechariah uses three figures of speech to help them understand how they appeared to God.

1. They turned their backs or shrugged their shoulders at God. Like a disrespectful person, the Israelites had shrugged off God's attempt to reach out to them and draw them close. There is an independent arrogance in this attitude. Instead of listening to our Creator and Redeemer, we function as if we are god and assume that we know better than He.

2. They stopped up their ears. Instead of having "ears to hear", they willingly made themselves deaf to God's instruction. This past Sunday my youngest son decided he had heard enough of me singing during worship and plugged his ears with his stubby little fingers as he smiled. Spiritually we can do the same thing with God.

3. They made their hearts diamond-hard. Instead of maintaining tender, sensitive hearts, this process resulted in a diamond-like heart which was impervious to God's warnings.

We need to hear Zechariah's warning today. We too can have the same attitudes and the same heart. We need to develop humility and acknowledge that God is GOD, not me. Instead of closing my ears to him and going my own way, I need to pay attention to what God has said. Instead of developing a heart that is as hard as a diamond, humility and submissive listening will let God's instruction go deep into

a tender and receptive heart.

If Zechariah were writing to you, what would he compare your heart to?

- Jeremy Dehut -

The Lights Came On!

*"The people who live in darkness have seen a great light, and for those living in the shadow-land of death, light has dawned."
- Matthew 4:16 (HCSB) -*

A few weeks ago, as we sat in the house following our evening meal, a thunderstorm came rolling in pouring buckets and buckets of water. In a very short amount of time the lights in the whole house were dimming off and on and eventually died. A power line had gone down, or a transformer had blown, and our subdivision was without power. We went from having several lights on along with hearing the hum and seeing the glow of appliances, computers and the television and then experienced complete darkness and silence! Our eyes, which had been used to the light, were useless until they adjusted. Then we went to the window and watched in amazement as lightning lit up the sky and jumped from cloud to cloud. When we left the window to navigate the darkened house we dug out flashlights and candles as we patiently waited for the lights to come back on.

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