

# Stand in the Gap

Steve Durham—February 11, 2017

Good evening everyone! It's interesting how the things that are said in the opening prayer coincide with what the speaker needs. I appreciate it. It definitely touches on the subject that we want to talk about.

It certainly is an amazing time, a very exciting time that we have. I think that this section of Ezekiel that God has provided for us in His Word has probably, at least in my mind, never before meant more to me than it does now, especially with the events that are unfolding in the United States, England and around the world. Certainly this is Satan's world and certainly things are speeding up.

I think what's happened is that things have happened without our being aware of it, sort of subtly. These elections have brought out the lack of morality, the evil and the wickedness to the surface so it could be identified. I think it was more than what we had expected, here in the United States.

Ezek. 22 has been on my mind quite a bit. I don't want to spend time going into the individuals who are involved. You can put names there as you might think they fit.

I am going to give you a little background about Ezekiel. It was written mainly toward the end of his life to the tribe of Judah. It was written around 630-570<sub>B.C.</sub>

Ezekiel was contemporary with Jeremiah, who was in Israel speaking to the ten tribes of northern Israel. They went into captivity in 721<sub>B.C.</sub>. Judah went into captivity in 604<sub>B.C.</sub> in a couple of ways and again in 585<sub>B.C.</sub> That's when Ezekiel went into captivity and spent his time there on the Chebar River in Babylon. Jeremiah and the ten tribes of Israel were already gone at that time. Ezekiel writes to Jerusalem and to Judah, here:

Ezekiel 22:30: "And I sought for a man among them who should build up a wall for the land, and **stand in the breach**... [gap] ...before Me, so that I should not destroy it. But I did not find one." You can do a study just picking these sections of phrases out in Ezek. 22:30.

Basically who he's talking to here is to Judah at a time in Israel that coincides with what's going on with us today. It really does! We'll read a little bit about what precedes his saying this.

I won't have time to go through each and every one of them and give examples, but you can think in your own mind, read the headlines and think of the events that are going on and you'll see how they coincide with the evil that's happening in our

societies, our communities and in our countries. The United States is not the only one. Britain, Australia, New Zealand, etc. are having the same ills and the same problems.

There's much we can learn from studying this Scripture, the situation around it and applying it is to apply it in our lives. To do so, again, we apply the Fourteen Rules for Bible Study, Appendix A: *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*.

Ezekiel 22:1: "Moreover, the Word of the LORD came to me... [Ezekiel] ...saying, 'Now you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city?... [Jerusalem] ...And yes, you shall make her know all her abominations'" (vs 1-2).

The purpose of this chapter, the whole book of Ezekiel and his mission was to warn Israel, warn Judah and let them know the sins that they were committing.

Isaiah 59:1: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities..." (vs 1-2). This is for us individually and also the nation. We're going to take this personally, as we should as we read God's Word.

"...have come between you and your God, and your sins have hid *His* face from you, that He will not hear" (v 2).

It's not that He can't, but He's not going to deal in sin and the profane. He only deals in the Holy. His desire for us is that we have a relationship with Him and that we become a Holy people, that we use God's Holy Spirit that He's given to us as His Church and spiritual Israel, to build that relationship with Him. So, Isaiah's lamenting here:

Verse 3: "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness. None calls for justice... [that sounds familiar] ...**nor does anyone plead for Truth**..." (vs 3-4).

Many people don't know what Truth is. The world is really void of Truth.

Actually, in Titus 1:16, it talks about people being 'reprobates.' Reprobate means that they are void of Godly judgment. That judgment comes from:

- understanding and knowing the Truth
- obeying and doing the Truth
- learning and growing in understanding and wisdom

How can they know the Truth if they don't do that?

Isaiah is saying that "...they trust in vanity and speak lies...." (v 4). John 8:44 talks about Satan being the father of lies and that they are his children. We are also, if we delve in:

- lies
- deceit
- half-truths
- little white lies
- don't let our yea be *yea* and our nay be *nay*

Those are things we need to think about so that we can stay on the 'straight and narrow' and stay true.

"...They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity" (v 4).

Verse 8: "They have not known the way of peace, and *there is* no justice in their ways. They have made crooked paths for themselves... [there's a lot to be said in God's Word about *the way*] ...whoever goes therein shall not know peace. Therefore, justice is far from us; nor does righteousness overtake us. We wait for light, but behold, darkness; for brightness, *but* we walk in deep shadows. We grope along the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes. We stumble at noonday as in the night; among those who are strong, we are like dead men. We all roar like bears, and mourn grievously like doves; we look for justice, but there is none, *we look* for salvation, yet, it is far from us" (vs 8-11).

We can go on down through here and it describes what's going on in Judah and Israel.

Ezek 22 coincides with that Scripture, that description that he's giving. Notice how it focused on truth, justice, deceit and lies.

Before there was a Satan, before Lucifer decided to go against God, there were no lies. I think that's a fair statement, because Satan is the *father of lies*. At that time, he became the *god of this world*. We have a world full of darkness and no light. Their eyes can't see.

Here it is. God is looking for a man. When we talk about *the eyes of God*, Fred talks about the seven spirits and the seven eyes. The eyes that go out and look:

- they see both the evil and the good
- they see the righteous and the wicked
- they see the heart and they report back

*God knows the heart and He knows the evil that He sees around!*

It's very difficult to watch the news when you're trying desperately to:

- do the Truth

- believe the Truth
- obey the Truth
- stay straight and focused on what God tells us

You turn the TV on watch what's going on around you, and it's very frustrating. You just have to maintain that hedge. When Scripture talks about 'building up the hedge,' it refers to a circular wall that encases and encloses righteousness; it surrounds us. You can't have a breach or a gap in that wall or evil comes in. We get off track. We get off the path, and we have a crooked path if we do that. It's very important that that wall, that enclosure, stays strong. When it does break, whether it's:

- in our personal life
- in the society
- socially in the world
- wherever it might be

No matter where it is, whenever it breaches, or breaks, then, somebody has to stand against that. ***Stand up and stand in the gap for God*** before God. What does that mean? *It means taking the Truth and doing battle against the evil, whether it's in your life through overcoming!* That's doing battle against that evil. That's closing the gap. It's closing the breach.

In the movie Star Wars, it said that 'there's a disturbance in the force.' Sometimes when we get off track and we feel that Spirit convict us. Our conscience is pricked, and we know that there's been a break in the wall. We need to fix that. We go on our knees, go before God and ask for the One Who originally stood in the gap for all men, for all mankind, and that's Jesus Christ is the One:

- that's the One Who we give allegiance to
- that's the One Who lives in us
- that's the One Who saves us

We go to Him and ask for His sacrifice and the blood of Christ to be shed on our behalf to wash us thoroughly of sin. We repent and go to our Father in white linen and white clothes looking for the righteousness of Christ to be justified. We can go personally before the throne of God and pray to our Father.

Ezek. 22 gives a list of things that happen that relate to Isa. 59:

- v 3—talks about the city shedding blood, making idols to herself and defiling herself
- v 4—because of this you have made your days shorter, to draw near—in other words, you can't continue this way

When our children are acting up, we correct them, and when we act up God corrects us (Heb. 12:6).

Ezekiel 22:4: "...Therefore, I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mocking to all countries."

The world is looking at Israel or the modern day Israelite; they're laughing at us. We have no longer had that respect. We've become a reproach to the world. The leaders in Israel and Judah have destroyed the families.

Verse 7<sub>[transcriber's correction]</sub>: "...In your midst they have dealt with the stranger by oppression. In you they oppressed the orphan and the widow."

James 1:27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

- keep the breaches from happening in the wall
- keep yourself in that enclosure:
  - ✓ with the Holy Spirit leading and guiding you
  - ✓ with the blood of Christ cleansing us
    - staying clean, right and true
    - staying on the straight path

That's what 'pure religion' is!

Ezekiel 22:8: "You have despised My Holy things..." To do that they almost have to have known them at some time. A lot of times we'll talk to a minister in another belief system:

- that actually knows what the Sabbath Day is
- they actually know what the Holy Days are
- they actually know what the laws are

So, they *despise those Holy things* and they prefer to have the profane. They prefer to walk in darkness. The Sabbath Days and the Holy Days are profane.

Verse 9: "In you are men of slander..." Now think about this in the news. The action of slander is *the action or crime of making a false spoken statement damaging to a person's reputation!*

Nations are families grown large, and families are individuals coming together, damaging a person's reputation. We're mocked individually and as a nation. We're mocked as Christians, as people who try to stay within that enclosure to pray to God, keep the Truth and keep the fires burning. We're slandered, fake news. What is that?

- slander
- liable
- smearing
- defaming
- blackening someone's name
- telling lies about someone

*again, the father of lies*

- speaking evil about them
- spreading a scandal

There's even a television show called *Scandal!* Amazing!

*Besmirch, tarnish and taints*: that's what slander means. They're men of slander; they're not men that *stand in the gap*. God's looking, His eyes see both the wicked, the evil *and the righteous* (Psa. 15).

"...they commit lewdness" (v 9). Think about what happens in the society around us—lewdness. It's indecency, lustful acts; basically sexual indulgences in public places and indecent exposure, all of that. *That's lewdness!* That's something that back then, and with the groves in the temples that they worshipped; that was a major part.

Sexual sins, Sabbath-breaking and idolatry have always been the downfall of Israel; it always has been, through the history of Israel and it's no different today.

- v 11—talks about sexual acts
- v 12—taking bribes

There's our government—isn't it?

Verse 12: "In you they have taken bribes to shed blood. You have taken usury and excessive increase, and you gained by extortion..."—which is obtaining something through force, or threats and blackmail. You could almost read the nightly news, here.

"...and **you have forgotten Me,**' says the Lord GOD" (v 12).

- What did He say as He brought Israel out of Egypt?
- What did He say as He established them as a kingdom and as a nation?

That was a model nation to the world. He would be with them and they would remember Him and teach it to their children (Deut. 4; 6).

Teach the laws and teach about God to the children generation after generation. 'Remember Me and I'll remember you'; the *if* statements.

Verse 13: "Therefore, behold, I have struck My hand against your dishonest gain which you have made, and at your blood which has been in your midst. Can your heart stand... [He's asking them] ...or can your hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with you?... [it's coming] ...I the LORD have spoken it and *I* will do it" (vs 13-14). *That's pretty serious!*

In 721<sub>B.C.</sub>, Israel was taken by the Assyrians up to the Caspian area and then hauled on up to the Danube and ended up in Trier and Trevetta, up in the German area, up in what was Assyria then, but now is Germany. They were scattered and mixed in with the nations. We won't go through all of those, but it's a very interesting study.

Verse 15: “And **I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you**... [Diaspora] ...in the countries, and will consume your uncleanness out of you.”

After you've been there for a while and you've been in captivity, maybe then you'll repent. You know, after a child has been spanked and he's sat over in a corner and he's gone to his room and thought about it, he comes back with a more contrite attitude.

Verse 16: ““And you will be profaned by your own selves in the sight of the heathen, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD.’ And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying” (vs 16-17).

In v 18-22<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>, the Lord gave a sermon on the purification of silver, but He talks about the different metals, melting them with the fire of tribulation, pouring out His fury on them, melting them, mixing them.

In the United States we were called the ‘melting pot’ of the world. In more ways than one we were: ‘give me your tired, your poor.’ At one point, those original immigrants who came to this country were of the tribe of Israel, the different Israelites tribes:

- France (Reuben)
- Ireland (Dan)
- England (Ephraim)

All the different tribes of people that were part of that were drawn to Ephraim and Manasseh.

Verse 21: “And I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in the midst of it.”

Verse 23: “And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying.... [v 25: ‘There is a conspiracy of her prophets...’]—*false prophets and false teachers!*

Jeroboam went to the north and he set up the religious system that we have today of sun-worship. It's so close to the original system that God set up in Israel; just a little ‘spin.’ That's all it took, just a little ‘spin.’ So, there were false prophets and false teachers.

Verse 26—God talks about the priests: “...They have put no difference between the Holy and the profane... [they did not teach the Law]

...and have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean...” —the difference between the two. Again, they turned the people away from the Sabbath and turned them to Sunday and from Passover to Easter: Ashtaroth.

Verse 27: “Her rulers in her midst *are* like wolves tearing the prey... [you can picture wolves tearing at the prey] ...to shed blood and to destroy souls, to get unjust gain.” They're so greedy for money, they'll do anything to hurt the population of the people that they're ruling over.

That's one of the immigration issues today. It's really more about votes and bringing in people who can work for a little bit of money, not a lot. It's like some type of slavery. You've got that cheap labor, but they're making financial gain:

- they don't want to see it go
- they don't want to see a wall
- they don't want to see vetting and all of that going on

There's more to it than just what meets the eye or what you hear in the news.

- v 28—the prophets lie for gain
- v 29—oppression and robbery trouble the poor, the needy and the stranger

There's a lot of good things said about the stranger. God set up certain things for the stranger and He told Israel to take care of the stranger. He also said that if the stranger doesn't follow God, they will ‘rise high above you and will oppress you and be your ruler.’ We're certainly seeing that happen, too.

Verse 30: ““And I sought for a man among them who should build up a wall for the land, and **stand in the breach** before Me, so that I should not destroy it. But I did not find one. Therefore, I have poured out My fury on them. I have burned them up with the fire of My wrath. I have recompensed their own way upon their heads,’ says the Lord GOD” (vs 30-31).

This world is looking toward a time in the future—‘Jacob's trouble,’ a time of tribulation—it's called the ‘Day of the Lord.’ It's a period of time where this actually happens again, as it has happened there.

Each one of us have periods of time in our lives when we get a ‘breach in the wall’ and we don't repair it and we don't get back to where we need to be to get that fixed. Certainly, God's not happy with that.

Today, God gives Israel, the Israelites nations—Ephraim and Manasseh and all of the nations around the world that are cousins, if you will, modern Israel—this warning. It's kind of a

‘clarion’ call. *He’s looking for men and women to stand in the gap!*

We’re talking about the eyes. God is looking. He’s checking the heart. He’s calling. No one knows why God calls certain people. We don’t know. I don’t know why He called me and you probably can’t answer why He called you. He’s see the heart. He see something He wants in you and He begins working with you. He begins drawing you (John 6:44).

Proverbs 15:3: “The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”

Proverbs 16:2: “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes...” *We think we’re pretty good!*

It is by our power, our innate goodness that we are on ‘top of the heap’ for a while, and England as well. We may not be there very long if we don’t change things up and repent and turn back to God (2-Chron. 7:14).

“...but the LORD weighs the spirits. **Commit your works unto the LORD**, and your thoughts shall be established.... [that’s what He’s looking for] ...The LORD has made all for His own purpose...” (vs 2-4).

Jeremiah<sup>[transcriber’s correction]</sup> 29:11: “For I know the purposes, which I am purposing for you...” Has God seen you as somebody to stand in the gap? That’s a good question. Are you someone He wants to **stand** in the gap?

“...says the LORD; ‘purposes of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you shall **call on Me**, and you shall **go and pray to Me**, and **I will hearken to you**’” (vs 11-12). Very important; you can do a study on this.:

- repent
- call on Him
- change
- ask for His Spirit
- asked to be led by it (Rom. 8)

Verse 13: “And you shall seek Me and find Me... [a promise] ...when you search for Me with all your heart.”

- sincerity
- conviction
- the heart
- not faking it
- not saying it
- not doing it

You can’t fake it. If your heart is in it, you’re going to do it. You’re really going after it, focusing on it.

Verse 14: ““And I will be found by you,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will turn away your captivity...””

- He’ll turn away your sin
- He’ll turn away your problems
- He’ll help you overcome through the Holy Spirit
- He’ll forgive you of the sins

“...and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places where I have driven you,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will bring you again into the place from where I caused you to be carried away captive’” (v 14). This is a prophesy for the future after His wrath is settled, the people ‘get it’ and they repent, they repent and they come out of the Tribulation.

There are some other Scriptures that indicate there’s probably about 10% of Israel that comes back out of that. They’re in a repentant attitude. We will get to be there on that ground floor of the establishment of His Kingdom and His government to help Christ bring those people:

- to the Truth
- to peace
- to the light
- to learn to live a way of health, happiness and prosperity in God

Proverbs 21:2: “Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes, but the LORD ponders the hearts.” He knows the heart. Who’s He looking for? *We’re starting to get a profile of the person—the man or the woman—that He’s looking for!*

First of all, we talked about what the breach is. We have to know what the breach is so we can stand in it. ‘The gap’ represents a place of weakness:

- it could be in a wall
- it could be in your own personal lives
- it could be in society
- it could be socially
- it could be physically
- it could be spiritual problems
- it could be family problems
- any weakness, vulnerability or danger

Basically, it’s sin. Sin is what causes that. It’s the profane, *not Holy*. God is teaching us the difference between sin and the Holy.

1-Peter 2:9: “But you *are* a chosen stock...” God has chosen us! We can go through that. There are many, many Scriptures that talk about our calling.

“...a royal priesthood, a Holy nation...” (v 9). You can’t be a Holy nation unless you understand what’s Holy.

“...a people for a possession of God...” (v 9). This is the reason why He wants a relationship with us. He wants children. He wants family.

“...that you might proclaim His *excellent* virtues...” [His Holy, righteous, character: love, joy, peace, etc.] ...Who called you out of darkness... [they were in darkness; they didn’t know *the Light*] ...into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people, but now *are the* people of God; who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy. Beloved, I exhort *you*, as strangers and sojourners, to restrain yourselves from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (vs 9-11).

That creates that hole, that breach in the wall, whether it be us in individually or the nation or the world. There is a hole in the world. There is a breach in the world. ***It is Satan’s world, and Christ is the Man Who came to stand in the gap, in that breach before the Father to heal it;*** bringing ‘healing in His wings to heal the broken-hearted.’ The man or woman that He’s looking for will have Christ in him/her.

I want to get a profile of what this man’s going to look like, so that we can become that man to stand in the gap that He’s looking for.

Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ, yet, I live.... [I’m alive physically] ...*Indeed*, it is no longer I; but Christ lives in me. For *the life* that I am now living in *the* flesh, I live by faith—that *very faith* of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

That’s very important, living by faith/belief. Paul talks about not denying Him. The person who lives in Christ, abides in Christ. Christ will abide in him and in John 17:11, 21, will be ‘one with the Father and Christ,’ living in him. Paul says that faith, ‘that very faith of Christ’ is what’s in us through the Holy Spirit. We have that Man:

- Who stood in the gap
- Who stands in the gap
- Who goes before the Father
- He’s our Mediator
- He’s our Advocate
- He’s the Sacrifice for us

by that blood:

- we live
- we have our sins forgiven
- we have access to the Father
- we have access to eternal life
- we have access to the Family of God
- we have access to be Elohim

- we have access be in that family forever

*That faith involves all that is involved in belief!*

If we think about different examples. Try to get this profile. Think about different examples of men who stood against sin and against evil and stood in the gap and stood for God’s way. There’s many of them, like Moses. David actually refers to him as standing in the gap:

Psalm 106:23: “And He said that He would destroy them, if Moses His chosen one had not **stood before Him in the breach**, to turn away His wrath, so that He should not destroy them.”

There is the prototype of Christ in Moses *standing in the breach before God the Father* on behalf of Israel. This is what God calls us to do, to help get His Word out, to get the work done. We are the workmanship of God.

Ephesians 2:10: “We are His workmanship...” We are the clay in the potter’s hands. He’s working with us.

- Are we allowing Him to do that?
- Are we getting rid of the obstructions and the profane so the Holy Spirit can flow in it’s full force through the vessel, through the temple:
  - ✓ to cleanse it?
  - ✓ to be Holy?
  - ✓ to be a Holy generation?
  - ✓ to be a Holy stock?
  - ✓ to be a priesthood?

It talks about in Rev. 5:10 that we’ll be ‘kings and priests’ someday.

Let’s think about David and Goliath. ‘Who is uncircumcised Gentile,’ David says, ‘that talks against God, the Holy One and the people of Israel, the people of God?’ Then David goes out and slays Goliath. Nobody else would do that.

I think this is interesting in talking about Gideon—Gideon’s army. Sometimes we don’t know why God calls us and we don’t know what our abilities are. God knows what our abilities are. It’s not to be anything big or great or whatever, if we understand that. God knows that and He calls us for a purpose.

Whenever you see someone do something, know that it’s God doing it in them, and that’s not them. It’s God doing it in them. As we understand that, have a contrite spirit and a humble heart, then God can use us even more.

In Gideon’s case, the Midianites were coming around stealing the women, burning their crops and really wreaking havoc.

Judges 6:12: “And the angel of the LORD... [Gideon is hiding in the corn] ...appeared to him, and said to him, ‘The LORD *is* with you, mighty warrior.’”

You know the angel had to have a smile on his face when he said that, because Gideon probably was head first in the corn. The angel pats him on the backside and says, ‘Hey, Gideon, man of war, you mighty warrior. God’s talking to you.’ Gideon goes on. We know the story and *he stands in the gap*, a mighty man of valor:

- courage
- nerve
- daring
- boldness
- backbone
- heroism

Joshua comes to mind God tells him three times in Joshua 1:6, 9, 18: “Be strong and of good courage....” Have that valor, a mighty man of valor. You’re someone I want to *stand in the gap*.

Why didn’t Joshua do that? *Because at the end of his life he said, ‘I want you to know that as far as me and my house, we will serve the Lord!’* His entire life he had come to understand the Truth of God, follow God and saw God in his life. He was committed. He was convinced, committed and dedicated to serving God. He told Israel, ‘I don’t know what’s going to happen to you after I leave here, but as far as I’m concerned, my house is going to serve the Lord.’

- Is that the attitude we have?
- Are we servants?
- Are we volunteers?
- Do we volunteer willingly, to be worked with and to become that man or woman to stand in the gap?
- What are the righteous like?

Sometimes we don’t think of ourselves like this, but it’s very important that we do. As we think about standing in the gap, whether it be the armies out there that are coming at us or the evil that comes at us. We are Christian soldiers; we have a fight. It talks about putting on *the armor of God*:

- the helmet of salvation
- the breastplate of righteousness
- the shield of faith
- your feet shod with the Gospel

It says in Hebrews about the two-edged sword. It’s both defensive and assertive or aggressive. You have the righteous, those who are trying to do what God tells them to do:

- to obey

- to have the compassion and the love that God has in us
- to love our neighbor and our brother
- to love God with all of our hearts, mind and soul

***This is what the righteous look like! This is who God is looking for to stand in the gap!***

Proverbs 28:1: “The wicked flee when no man pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.” Are you bold as a lion? *In the tribe of Judah, Christ is the Lion of Judah!* We are to have Christ in us and the mind of Christ in us, the faith of Christ. If we get out of the way we can be just like that. We can be bold as lions as we stand in the gap and we fight these things that come at us, sin that comes at us. Some of the other men:

- George Washington
- Abraham Lincoln
- Winston Churchill

As God worked with these men, He worked with the men of God, of course—we see that in Heb. 11, all through there—who we look to as the men and women of faith. God chose those men at that time to do a job, to help physical Israel, help with His plan for them.

Daniel 4:17: “...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will... [to whomever He chooses] ...and sets up over it the basest of men.” We have seen that. We’ve seen that Scripture.

We pray to God. We ask God to lead these individuals, whoever he puts in there. It just so happens that we can judge or we can make a discernment from what people say and how they live their life, as to whether they are trying to be on track on a moral basis or they’re trying to be off track on a wicked and evil basis.

You’ve got people like Ben Carson and you’ve got Mike Pence and you’ve got Donald Trump. I think he’s got a good heart. You’ve got Huckabee and some other people. You’ve got some names in there that are really trying to do things right. They’re trying to bring things back. What I think happened was that we didn’t realize just how big the ‘swamp’ was, how much there was and how clogged up it was. When you start to push people and you start to take away:

- their power
- their wealth
- their income
- their money

They're not going to like it. You're really have a fight on your hands. What does God say about it in Matt. 5? He say in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:10: "Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness..." In so many Scriptures, they talk about, 'I will be with you. I will be there with you. You just do what I tell you to do and have heart to follow Me.'

- What does it take to stand in the gap?
- What's God looking for? *He's looking for compassion, love, mercy, the fruits of the spirit!*

Psalm 34 starts to give you an idea of the heart, mind and soul of a person who is searching and striving to do what God wants him to do—compassion.

Psalm 34:18: "The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves those who are of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all His bones; not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked..." (vs 18-21). It talks about a martyrdom that's coming down the road. He's going to slay the wicked.

"...and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants; and none of them who take refuge in Him shall be condemned" (vs 21-22). No matter what, *focus*.

Think about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego standing before the fiery furnace: 'No matter what, oh king, God can take our lives or He can save us. We will serve the Lord.' Joshua: 'I want to serve the Lord.'

Psalm 51:17: "The sacrifices of God..." He doesn't want them. He says, 'I didn't really care for the blood, killing the animals and all. He says, 'That's not what I really want. This is what I'm looking for':

- to stand in the gap
- to heal the breach
- to be my son
- to have Christ living in them

Verse 17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem" (vs 17-18).

We have a part in that. Whether it be today as we learn, as we build our own individual wall and gaps, or in the future when Israel comes back and we help to build that. The city of Jerusalem has walls. It has gates and walls. I really don't know why, but

they're there. You've got to have walls to have gates. There are twelve gates. Maybe that's the reason.

Isaiah 57:15: "For thus says the high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity... [that's our reward: *eternity*] ...Whose name *is* Holy..." If you want to know what Holy is, devote:

- your life
- your heart
- your mind
- your soul

*everything to understanding God and John 1:1*

- the Word
- the Logos
- the Spokesman

—Who was there before the world, with the Father. The Father inhabits eternity; He's Holy.

"... 'I dwell in the high and Holy place, even with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit...' " (v 15). He's drawn to that, and sin He's repelled from. That's the Father.

"...of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (v 15). That's what God wants:

- compassion
- mercy
- love
- justice
- judgments

*He wants all the fruits of the Spirit!*

Another thing that He wants is obedience. Obedience doesn't sound right. People in the world, they don't like that. They don't like to be told what to do. As you build love, the love of God—that agape, mercy and love—you learn to love your brother.

Christ said to His disciples, John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you, that *is how* you are to love one another. By this shall everyone know that you are My disciples..." (vs 34-35) That you have Me in you, that you abide in Me and I abide in you and the Father is in us. We're all one (John 17:11, 21).

"...if you love one another" (v 35). That's the commandment that He gives to us. That's what we're supposed to be learning to do—and our obedience.

Abraham—the father of Israel, the spiritual father (Rom. 3:29; James 2:21). We are Abraham's seed and we're Spiritual Abraham, Israel—obeyed My voice (Gen. 26:5). You can go on down through John 13.

Psa. 119—obedience to the Law. The Law sounds so mean. Nobody wants to do the Law, because that’s really telling you what to do and ‘I’m a law unto myself. I can do my own thing. I don’t need somebody telling me that.’

Psalm 119:97: “O how love I Your Law! It is my meditation all the day.... [then it talks about what it does] ...Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation (vs 97-99).

Verse 101: “I have held back my feet from every evil way...”

Verse 113: “I hate those who are double-minded, but Your Law do I love.” That’s the world around us, double-minded. James talks about that, being double-minded, not having a focus and a oneness all speaking the same thing, having a oneness, having the mind of Christ, the heart of Christ, imitating Christ.

Verse 163: “I hate and despise lying... [the father of lies (John 8:44)] ...but I love Your Law.”

If we want to know what the Holy is, and we want to know what God is, God is the Word. His Law comes from Him. It is love. God is love (1-John 4:8, 16).

If we understand the Law, we’ll understand the Holy One, we’ll understand the Holy. We’ll have discernment between the profane and the Holy. That will be someone that God looks to and is drawn to and wants to choose to stand in the gap. It’s somebody who has the mind and the heart to serve God. It’s a servant. It’s a volunteer to serve, to have a duty to do and feels compelled to do that duty and doesn’t shirk that duty and doesn’t move off of it one way or the other.

If you have God in you, you aren’t going to have a variance. You aren’t going to have a ‘shadow of turning.’

James 1:17: “Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning. According to His own will, He begat us by *the* Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings. For this reason, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger because man’s wrath does not work out God’s righteousness” (vs 17-20). It’s very important that we love, build the Holy righteous character, that we’re obedient and that we are convicted in the heart.

A soldier that goes out to war—the analogy of standing in the breach is a military, or a battle, a

war analogy. He is a man of action, is convicted and acts on it in the face of death. He doesn’t shirk. He doesn’t move. He doesn’t go one way or the other. He goes right straight.

I love horses. War Horse is a beautiful movie. Horses are amazing animals. They will charge in fire, flame, guns and bombs going off. They have one focus, they’re headed right into danger. So:

- loving
- having the agape
- being obedient

1-Timothy 1:5: “Now the purpose of the commandment is **love out of a pure heart**... [you can’t do it unless you have a pure heart] ...and a good conscience...”

Sin convicts and a conscience, you get guilt when you’re sinning. When you’re profane, you have guilt. You don’t want to go to the Father. You don’t want to pray. The breach gets bigger and bigger and pretty soon, if you’re not careful, you’re overtaken.

The country is the same way. If you don’t have this “...love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and genuine faith” (v 5), then it’s doomed, as it was in Ezekiel’s day.

Verse 6: “From which some, having missed the mark, have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of *the* law, neither understanding what they are saying, nor what they are strongly affirming” (vs 6-7).

- What is it about us?
- What’s God looking for?

I want to talk to you about a movie. I love movies, good movies. We talk about Washington and Abraham Lincoln. We talk about Winston Churchill and all the men of the Bible, you can go through scores of them. There’s a more recent example of a man who stood in the gap, a man who had what we’re talking about. Sometimes I think our parameters get broadened. Sometimes our thinking gets broadened when we see an example like this. This is a real, true story. I going to give it to you and I’m going to try to condense it and get through it quickly. You can watch the movie.

This individual was a Seventh Day Adventist. Sometimes in our past we have thought that no one is called, nobody has God’s Holy Spirit except those who were called and brought into the Worldwide Church of God. Then we find people popping up over here and over here, who have never heard about the Church, *The Plain Truth* magazine, or any of that. Then we find out that this person:

- kept the Sabbath
- read the Bible every day
- had strong faith
- conviction
- love
- obeyed everything that he understood

I don't know about the Holy Days but kept the Sabbath religiously and were convicted!

It's said that back in 1940, WWII, he was a conscientious objector. The movie is called *Hacksaw Ridge* by Mel Gibson. If you haven't seen it, I would strongly suggest that you go see it. There's a lot of blood in it. There's war. There's a section where they are fighting. That's the beauty of this individual's conviction in life. It was what he did under fire, under almost certain death and how he stayed true to his convictions, to God and the Truth. I would say the Truth, because he kept the Sabbath. He knew about many of the things we know about. I don't know how broadly he understood.

The movie starts back about when he was a child. He was just like everybody else. He fought with his brother. His dad had been in WWI and he was struggling with the problems of losing his best friends. He lived and they died. His dad would go to the cemetery every day. He drank heavily. He was abusive and he was trying to struggle with that.

The boys grew up in an environment where they were beat every day, an abusive environment. He says later on in the middle of the battle, with the lull of the battle one evening, he's talking to a guy that wasn't his friend before, but he saved his life that day. They're talking and he says, 'I can take all the beating that you and the guys gave me—I'll talk about that in a minute—and the beating my dad gave me, but it was when he turned on my mom that I couldn't take that anymore.'

One day when he was in his teens, his dad was beating his mom—the gentlemen's name is Desmond Doss—Desmond came in the room and fought with his dad. His dad had a gun and was going to shoot his mom. He took the gun from his dad and he pointed the gun at his father. He was really struggling with it and finally his dad broke into tears. Desmond stopped and he put the gun down.

He told this gentleman, he said, 'It was at that moment—earlier he had had a fight with his brother when he was eight and had hit him in the head with a brick and almost killed him—when I saw that,' he said, 'I determined, I promised God that I would not touch a gun again, that it was breaking the sixth commandment.'

His friend said, 'Well, you didn't kill him.' Desmond said, 'No, but I killed him in my heart. So,

I determined that I would never pick a gun up again and I would not kill.'

It goes on through some other things. They head off to Okinawa in the Pacific. It shows them standing as a brigade at the base of Hacksaw Ridge. Hacksaw Ridge is on the beach. It then goes straight up. There's netting to go up and then there's a plateau at the top. This is where all the Japanese had 'dug in' and they were looking at Desmond.

What had happened before in the barracks was that it became obvious that he was a conscientious objector. The guys really gave him a hard time:

- they taunted him
- they ridiculed him
- they beat him up
- they had 'blanket parties'
- they beat him senseless

Yet, he would not relent. He would not go home. The commander decided to kick him out, get him out. It was a rifle brigade. He was supposed to be in the service as a medic.

When WWII started, Pearl Harbor was bombed. It was a different time back then. Tom Brokaw writes about the 'greatest generation.' Everybody determined to go to war, to sign up and to stand up for the nation. Brokaw talks about three guys in his town that were 4-F, that couldn't go; they weren't physically able. But Desmond was able. Those three people committed suicide because they couldn't go. That's how strong was their commitment to going and serving.

Desmond said, 'I am of a sound mind, sound body and it was my duty to go and serve. I want to go in as a medic. I'm want to save lives.' That was his purpose—to save lives.

They found out, when the guns were passed out and he wouldn't take one, that he was a conscientious objector. He told the sergeant, 'I can't touch a gun. I'm not going to touch a gun. I'm not going to kill anyone. I'm going to save lives.'

To make a long story short: They're now in Okinawa and they're going up the Ridge. They get on top and everything breaks out, bodies everywhere. He's pulling people out and a couple of other medics get killed. It stops a moment with this guy that had been beating him up in the barracks and didn't like him, Desmond saved his life. That guy gets shot and Desmond is carrying him to the edge of the cliff and he dies.

The Navy ships are shelling the top and there's fire and explosions everywhere. Desmond says to God, 'Why? Why am I here? Where are You? I don't know why I'm here. I don't hear You.'

At that moment you hear this cry of someone who's wounded and Desmond says, 'Okay, God,' and he takes off.

Everyone else leaves because the Navy's shelling. Desmond stays there all night and drags 75 bodies off the top, by himself. Each time he comes to the end of the cliff to let another one down, he prays. He says, 'Just let me have one more, God, just one more.' Then, he goes back and sees another one.

Later on it was written that he went into battle without a gun. All he had was a Bible and his faith

- conviction that he would not kill
- that he believed in God
- that God would protect him and save him

He was hit by a sniper. He had 14 pieces of shrapnel in him. He goes down the ridge and they bind him up. All 75 guys are down there looking at him. Everybody's looking at him like, 'Wow! God is really with him!'

Later on they would say, 'It wasn't what you believed, it was how strongly you believed it. We believed in what you believed—the strength of your conviction. That's what motivated us.'

The next day, the captain comes to him in that night and says, 'We've got to go back up again. They're still up there and we've got to take them off. I know this is your Sabbath Day, but would you please? The guys won't go unless you do. They won't go without you. Will you please go?' He thinks about it and he says, 'Yeah, I will.'

The next scene is, he's there. All of them. The entire group was down at the bottom. They're all standing there getting ready to go up the hill and Desmond was over to the right.

The captain gets a phone call from the commander, 'Why aren't you up the Hill?' He says, *We're waiting on Desmond.* 'What do you mean? Who's Desmond?' *We're waiting on him to finish praying.* They're sitting there looking at him and he's over there praying. Desmond stops and he says, 'Okay.' The captain says, 'All right. Let's get this done.' So, they go up and they take the hill.

You've got to see the conviction, because it puts us inside Desmond. It highlights and personifies the conviction, the love, the commitment to a cause and to a purpose.

What one of us would not have opted out? They gave him options to get out. They said, 'Look, you're a conscientious objector. You don't have to go through this, go on home. We'll take you back home. Nobody will think anything of you.' He said, 'No! I am there to save lives. There's a purpose for my being here and I will not shirk my responsibility,

my commitment. I know God will protect me.' God did! Desmond went up there and he did it.

It's amazing! That's the kind of person that God is looking for. I believe that his being a Seventh Day Adventist, that we have to broaden our thinking somewhat. How can we say that God was not with him? I believe He was.

That's a kind of commitment unto death, in the face of danger, in the face of certain death. A commitment to God that God looks for in who He's looking for in standing in the gap.

Desmond was a warrior. Desmond was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and several other citations, the Purple Heart and some other things. He was the only conscientious objector in WWII to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for the deeds.

Truman—who handed out the medal—took his hand and said, 'This is a greater honor than becoming President, to shake your hand and give you this medal.' The entire time the President spoke, he held Desmond's hand and wouldn't let go of it. What an honor!

Desmond died in 2003, and his brother said, 'It's stupid to get on somebody who has a belief. It's a joke. That belief is what makes them who they are.' Our belief makes us a son of God, a begotten Son of God.

- Are we committed?
- Do we do things like:
  - ✓ cut corners?
  - ✓ run stop signs?
  - ✓ things in the 'gray areas'?
- Is that what God would do?
- When we're doing our work, do we cut corners when we're working?

*or:*

- Do we do a perfect job to the best of our ability?
- Try our best to please God as if we're doing our work for God, for Christ, working on His house?
- Do we take that in?
- Do we do that?
- Do we have that kind of commitment and that type thinking?

I'll leave you with this last Scripture. It talks about the heart of a volunteer, a servant. Christ was the Chief among servants:

- He washed feet
- He showed us how to have that heart
- He showed us through His life and everything He said was what God the Father said

- Is what we say and do what Christ says?

When it comes time for us, God is looking for someone to stand in the gap.

- Are we looking to our Father and Jesus Christ to be the One to stand in the gap?
- Do we have this attitude that's in Isa. 6?

Isaiah 6:8: **“And I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’”**

- Romans 3:29
- James 2:21
- Genesis 26:5
- 1-John 4:8, 16

Also referenced: Appendix F: Fourteen Rules for Bible Study (*The Holy Bible In Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*)

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- 1) Ezekiel 22:30; 1-2
- 2) Isaiah 59:1-4, 8-11
- 3) Ezekiel 22:4, 7
- 4) James 1:27
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- 6) Proverbs 15:3
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- 8) Jeremiah 29:11-14
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- 10) 1-Peter 2:9-11
- 11) Galatians 2:20
- 12) Psalms 106:23
- 13) Ephesians 2:10
- 14) Judges 6:12
- 15) Joshua 1:6, 9, 18
- 16) Proverbs 28:1
- 17) Daniel 4:17
- 18) Matthew 5:10
- 19) Psalms 34:18-22
- 20) Psalms 51:17-18
- 21) Isaiah 57:15
- 22) John 13:34-35
- 23) Psalm 119:97-99, 101, 113, 163
- 24) James 1:17-20
- 25) 1-Timothy 1:5-7
- 26) Isaiah 6:8

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- Ezekiel 22:3, 11
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