

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 2 - Study 4 **I love God, I love His Church, and I love America... I am encouraged.**
C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: **Acts 15:16,17) After this I will return... That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called...**

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These are brief studies, not
"teachings" or "doctrines".

Volume 2, Study 4

Ezekiel 36:1) '...son of man, prophesy...and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD.'

Recently in God's Word there has been encouragement for me regarding His Church in America. I have been aware for many years of the drawing nearer and nearer of God's judgment upon America due to her growing sins, but more pressingly due to the rising up everywhere in and across the country of rebellious Progressivism, the definition of which is --

progressive: to move forward, to advance by successive stages, to tend toward improvement by favoring reform and/or encouraging the adoption of new methods, inventions, and conventions...and then by increasing such efforts as the base or foundation of the forward looking movement increases.

Perhaps one day I shall share more about progressivism. But for now I repeat: Recently God's Word has encouraged me. No Christian can love the real and historic America, and God's Church in America, and not have become discouraged. Therefore, I wish to share with you some of my recent encouragement. Days ago I was reading in Ezekiel 36 where God's spokesman the Son of man (i.e. Ezekiel in this case and not Jesus Christ) is given direct Words of Encouragement by God to His discouraged people.

(Note in the Gospels that Jesus refers to himself as 'Son of man' within his Encouraging-role as God's Messenger to God's people. Jesus' reference to himself is right out of the Book of Ezekiel where God refers to Ezekiel as 'son of man'. Also note in the KJV in Ezekiel that 'son of man' is not capitalized and that 'Son of man' in the Gospels is capitalized; this is the translators wanting to distinguish between Ezekiel and Jesus - both were 'son of man' type messengers of encouragement for God to His people.)

Now let us get on with Ezekiel 36. At first I hesitated to share this with you, but then Sunday sitting in church another passage decided for me (more about it at the end of the Ezekiel chapter). So let us (only for the moment of this study, as I almost never do this) imagine the words below to be for the true Church in America, and for you and me -

36:1,2) Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession:

God's words are for the *mountains of Israel*, specifically the twin mountains within which lies the ancient city of Jerusalem upon which God had placed His NAME.

In the case of our study where we are momentarily imagining that these words are for us, let us take those mountains to be *God's true Church in America*.

36:3) Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side...

Dear reader, as I compare the present true Church in America to the true Church in America of years past (I am in my seventieth year) I cannot keep back my tears.

If you are much younger then you might take my words as “longing for the old days”. But all I can say to you is for you to be in-and-stay-in the Word and you will begin to see how far short of scripture is your idea of the modern Church...which has striven for many years of late *to improve itself* so as *to attract the heathen*. Our improvements upon God’s Ways..., well let me say it, “God’s Ways have never needed improving. And ‘old fashion ways’ and ‘modern ways’ have never been a part of God’s Constant Ways”. When leaving what had worked in God’s Ways we have become entangled in what presently we think “is working” even as the heathen have come to scorn and ridicule us, for they see that any power which we might have had is now GONE. Indeed, where is the fear of the heathen as we proclaim the Word of God.

I continue to insert words to make scripture particularly pertinent to us.

...that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of [their] talkers, and are an infamy of the [common-still-American-loving] people:

Historically in America the true Church of Christ has been at the very least honored by the common-still-America-loving people because they have held in honor the words of the Bible even if in the main they have not lived by those words. Therefore, ‘**the heathen**’ (of this little imaginary study) had given up on destroying the Church and have focused upon infiltrating it, influencing it, and affecting it enough that the common people will at least ignore it...and they hope the common people will ultimately scorn it even as do ‘**the heathen**’.

36:4) Therefore, ye mountains of Israel [i.e. true Church in America], hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about;

Let us interpret ‘**the residue of the heathen**’ as *all that is within the Church of America and all that is ‘round about’ the Church of America (including the rising tide of Progressivism) that ‘prey’ upon and cause ‘derision’ to the true Church of America.*

36:5) Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea [i.e. Edom, ancient Mount Seir that was taken over by Jacob’s brother Esau], which have appointed my land [i.e. the land of Jacob] into their possession [and] with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out [i.e. my people Jacob] for a prey.

Much could be said about our present situation as a reflection of the *kinship* of these brothers, grandsons of Abraham, and *what Edom was doing to Jacob (Israel)*, but I shall forbear.

So let us continue to imagine that the true Church in America is God’s true people ...spiritual Jacob, Israel. (Yet, please remember that this is imaginary for the moment of this study so as to help and encourage you and me. But know that God’s people Israel are God’s people, and that the first and fundamental Promises are for them, and that we Gentile Christians are ‘**a wild olive branch grafted in**’.)

36:6) Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel [i.e. true American churches], and say unto the mountains [i.e. the true Church in America], and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen:

Please note the italics, for the true Church in America *has born the shame cast upon it from the heathen*. Indeed, the true Church has *born the scorn of the ungodly*: which to their minds and hearts “is shameful amid their ideals of the ongoing and progressive tide of human events”. They see us as low on the scale of *human progression, a dragging weight* to their work. Yet, this is expected, having always been so in human history.

Moreover, we do have our own shameful sins, in that the sins of society have always affected the true Church down through the ages in various ways by creeping in as we try

to become *more acceptable* to society, thinking that we should at least *mingle somewhat* to “help them see truth and to win some”.

Within such efforts progressivism has crept into the Church of America as an ever-present historical force within human society. Indeed, we have slipped into the egotistical desires of our flesh *to improve* and *to move forward* God’s Word. But I will try not to press much further the concept of progressivism in our churches...for we are presently looking for encouragement from God’s Word.

36:7) Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their [own] shame.

The heathen of our little study think that we are a shameful and backward people. Yet, the common people of all societies throughout the ages of mankind have understood what is real ‘**shame**’. Often the common person is fooled for awhile, but when God (who is Good) works (whether in His salvation or in His wrath) then the common person has his or her eyes opened and can see and recognize real ‘**shame**’ when they see it. Thus, the ‘**shame**’ of the heathen shall be revealed for all to see. Moreover, the heathen shall ‘**bear**’ their shame.

36:8,9) But ye, O mountains of Israel [i.e. true Church of America], ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel [i.e. God’s true people]; for they [i.e. God’s righteous fruits] are at hand [and are ready] to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown:

Tilling is needed to remove the true Church’s unwanted stones and thorn bushes so a truly fruitful crop can be sown. Such ripping and tearing is needful even though many of us will think it is our own judgment...which of course it will be...because before the heathen are judged God first judges His own people (1Peter 3:17). Ah, but our God is Compassion and will make the tilling as short as possible because He said ‘**behold, I am for you**’.

36:10,11) And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel [i.e. God’s true people], even all of it: and the cities [i.e. true churches] shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: And I will multiply upon you [i.e. the mountains, the true Church in America] man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates [i.e. the old foundations of God’s Ways], and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

36:12) Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou [i.e. the mountains, the true Church as God has always meant it to be] shalt be their [i.e. God’s true people] inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them [i.e. God’s true people] of [the lack of] men [coming in].

36:13,14) Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they [i.e. the heathen] [now] say unto you, Thou land [i.e. God’s true churches in America] devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations [i.e. thy neighbors all round the world]; Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations [i.e. neighbors] any more, saith the Lord GOD.

Ah dear reader, please pay heed to the last sentence of verse 14. The true Church of God has throughout history and do presently ‘**devour men**’. We have had wars among ourselves and have had wars against many innocent heathens not at war with us.

We still do it in our modern and more sophisticated ways...even as the heathens of the world have taught us. We have been learners of their *devouring trade*. No wonder the common folk of the world and especially the heathens (as depicted in this little study) wonder and shake their heads at us, some even hating us. In this we have *our own shame*.

Ah, but the heathen and the common people of the world in their shame do not have the God that we have in our shame. He is a God of Salvation to us and to all who shall call upon Him...when He begins to do His work as described herein. In such days ‘**The hearts and minds of many shall be revealed**’ (Luke 2:34,35).

36:15) Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen [which they now heap upon you in derision] **any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the [common] people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations** [i.e. thy neighbors] **to fall any more** [as they have not seen and could not find God in you], **saith the Lord GOD.**



36:16) Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

36:17) Son of man, when the house of Israel [i.e. God's true people] **dwelt** [unhindered] **in their own land** [i.e. their churches], **they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman.**

This is something like '**our righteousness is as filthy rags**' (Isaiah 64:6). This happens as we *think to do things better*, which means *different*, which ignorantly *leads us away* from God's Ancient Ways of how He does it. We think that we need to attract people to God, when what people need is for God to have His Ancient Way with us so that the people wanting to be saved can find some of us saved ones and the God that saved us.

36:18,19) Wherefore I poured my fury upon them [i.e. God's true people] **for the blood that they had shed upon the land** [i.e. the true churches], **and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries:** [as] **according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.**

The true Church in America '**defiled**' itself by egotistically thinking to *improve* itself (for God and for America and for the lost, etc.) and then acting upon such concepts and spreading such concepts into many of the churches they have ever *improved* those concepts. (Such is the environment of many churches large and small today.) Amid the swirl of such improvements there arose (and do arise) varying points of view with dissensions following...resulting in more factions, more churches, more study groups, etc...all trying to "do it *better*".

36:20) And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they [arrogantly] **said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land** [i.e. His churches to spread the word].

The Israelites did not *go out of God's land*; they were forced out amidst God's anger. Therefore, in their arrogance they lied. Ah, but the nations knew they were lying to cover up their shame of God's '**fury**' upon them; they fooled only themselves. Therefore, the nations did not fear the people of whom they used to fear and respect. Dear true Church in America, do you recognize yourself?

36:21,22) But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel [i.e. God's true Church in America] **had profaned among the heathen, whither** [i.e. wherever] **they went. Therefore say unto the** [now scattered] **house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went** [by claiming that you work for God, when all along it was God who had at one time worked for you].

36:23) And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you [i.e. God's true remnant people, well tilled and repentant] **before their eyes.**

36:24) For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries [i.e. neighborhoods both of common people and heathens], **and will bring you into your own land** [i.e. God's own chosen places ordained and approved by Him in a manner recognizable by all].

36:25) Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols [of egotistical willfulness toward Me in thinking you could improve on My methods], **will I cleanse you.**

36:26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

That is, a soft righteously compassionate heart to your brethren and to your neighbors.

36:27,28) And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my [olden] statutes, and ye shall keep my [olden] judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land [i.e. true churches in America] that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

36:29,30) I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

36:31) Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

36:32) *Not for your sakes do I this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel [O my true people].

36:33,34) Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it [presently] lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

Sadly, in our present condition, there are very few churches that clearly realize the attitude of the everyday common American toward their church. They are beginning to realize the forces of the heathen against them, but their solution is to do the natural thing and tighten up their ranks and join with other such tightened churches to gain numbers against the foe, which further angers God who wants us to give up our trying and turn only to Him. Even in prayers they think that if enough pray or if enough fast, etc. that God will come down from heaven and do mighty works that will justify them in their efforts for God.

Folks, God does not need us. But He does want to justify Himself before the enemy in His having chosen us, pitiful as we are. He may well be ready for the true Church in America to experience some of the things in this Ezekiel chapter. Is the true Church in America ready to be judged by our God?

If anything, I expect that our Righteous God may be more interested in judging the proud heathen strutting around in their ways than He is in saving us from our ways.

36:35,36) And they [i.e. the common people] shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.

Dear reader, I love God, I love His Church, and I love America. And I am encouraged.

36:37) Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this [i.e. these things] be enquired of by the house of Israel [i.e. God's true remnant], to do it for them; I will increase them with men [coming in] like a flock.

Once the true Church in America has experienced the above, especially verses 31-34, then for these things God will 'be enquired of' by them 'to do it for them'.

36:38) As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem [i.e. God's people entering Jerusalem] in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities [each one also] be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Dear reader, I was thinking that this was for me and my encouragement...because as you can see I have basically stolen (for the moment) this wonderful Passage of Promise that God gave to all Israelites and made it for all true Christians in America. I thought, "Perhaps it is too selfish a thing to do, and to put it out on the Internet, in my love for God's Church in America and for historic America. Indeed, is not every one in their country full of love for their people and their country?" But then yesterday at church a passage jumped out at me towards the end of the pastor's sermon in Acts 15. It is -

Acts 15:15,16) [The Apostle James speaking,] **And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:**

15:17) That the residue [i.e. remnant] of men [of Israel] might seek after the Lord, and [also] all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

15:18,19) Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world [among Israelites and among the Gentiles]. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

Note in verse 17 '**the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called**'. The word '**called**' is the Greek word for '**invoked**'. That is, the Gentiles who *invoke my name* or *call upon my name*. Moreover, in scripture the word '**Gentiles**' used often in the KJV is actually '**the nations**'. Verse 15 then is '**That the residue [i.e. remnant] of men [of Israel] might seek after the Lord, and [also] all the nations, upon whom my name is invoked, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.**

Now let me remind you of the birth of the United States of America. The fathers of America *invoked* the Name of God (the God of the Bible) in the very foundational documents of the new republic even as they were giving birth to the American nation.

Moreover, note that the Apostle James, head of the apostles in Jerusalem, said '**Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the nations are turned to God:**' Moreover, James made it clear '**Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world** [among the Israelites and among the nations].'

We see, then, that from America's birth as a nation America had *invoked* and still *invokes* the Name of God. It is my opinion that America is not and has never been "a Christian nation"; yet, no one can deny that the Name of God was evoked by America's fathers upon the nation at its birth. So far, we still have "God" on our money and in the many inscriptions in the nation's capital. It was meant for and has been and is *a nationalized form of honoring the God of the Bible*. I doubt that anyone can sustain an argument that the God of the Bible has not blessed America. Even the nation's latest president ends his speeches to the nation with "God bless America".

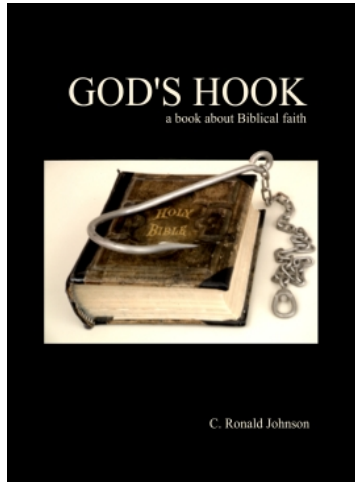
We have seen in the above study how (at least in my view and comments) how the Church in America has eventually failed in God's purpose for it in America and it is now openly despised by heathens and mostly ignored by most common Americans. And in my view we have seen how we have arrived to our present condition.

Now if this nation will continually cling to its *invoking* of the Name of God and its place in the world where God has placed America, then perhaps even the God of Righteousness will spare America even in His judgment of her.

And dear reader realize that when and where God judges a nation, He first judges His people. Dear American Christian, are you willing for Almighty God to righteously judge you and your church and the true Church in America so that in His judgment of America that He might, as He has in the past, continue honoring America's *invoking of His Name*? If so, then America might survive: but not as a "changed America", rather as a renewed olden America. If so, America may only be a '**remnant**', but it would be the kind of '**remnant nation**' upon which for many years God had smiled.

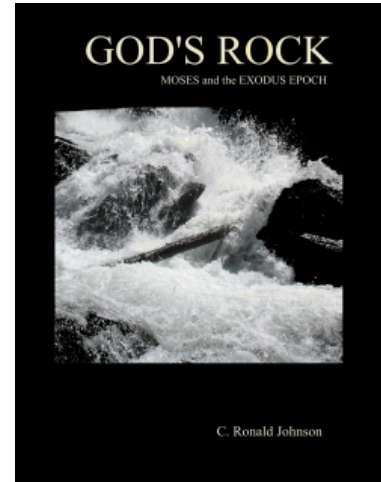
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These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson of Christian Wilderness Press.



a book
about
Biblical
Faith

the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus



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