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SABBATH FOCUS: THE PLOWING OF THE WICKED

A Proverbs commentary by Randy Stiver

Obviously, the “plowing of the wicked” can’t be a good thing! In fact, that’s precisely the case. It’s from a proverb: “A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin” (Prov. 21:4).

During God’s seven Days of Unleavened Bread we, the faithful, avoid bread made, or “plowed”, as it were, with leavening (yeast, baking soda or even sourdough). We know the meaning of getting rid of sin and a haughty or puffed-up outlook.

God’s law of plowing

Yes, there is a law of plowing: “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together” (Deut. 22:10). Largely it’s the principle of “like with like.” Donkeys and oxen are not “like” each other when it comes to plowing. The donkey is small, and the ox is big. The yoke is the most effective pulling apparatus for oxen, but not for donkeys—they need a harness. Nor are their strides similar—a critical requirement for teamed pulling.

We now are the few mixed with many in this world’s culture that plow sinfully, but one day, through the intervening power of Jesus Christ, the world will be filled with “the faithful” who plow positive furrows. We, *and they*, will finally be equally yoked in truth and righteousness.

Plowing sin vs. plowing righteousness

God inspired Job to record the “cause and effect” plowing observation of his friend Eliphaz the Temanite: “Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same” (Job 4:8). It appears to be a harsh accusation against Job for supposedly causing his own trouble by secret sins. A valid observation, but greatly misapplied to Job.

And how about not plowing at all? “The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing” (Prov. 20:4). Being too lazy to plow the ground for planting is in effect “plowing” the sin of laziness. That principle also applies spiritually.

“Plowing” as national punishment

Hosea the prophet wrote during the early to mid-700s B.C. – the very time that the Assyrian Empire conquered and took captive the northern 10 tribes of Israel who had been under the leadership of the tribe of Ephraim. “Ephraim is a trained heifer, That loves to thresh *grain*; But I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull a *plow*. Judah shall plow; Jacob shall break his clods” (Hosea 10:11). The Tribes plowed crooked spiritual rows to their own hurt.

“Plowing” for repentance

There is “punishment” plowing (above), as well as “promise” plowing for the lost 10 Tribes of Israel:

“Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek the Lord, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you (Hosea 10:12).

Hosea explains the cause and effect of bad vs. good plowing for both ancient and modern Israelite nations (mainly the USA, British and northwest European nations):

“You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way, In the multitude of your mighty men (Hosea 10:13).

Our modern nations have put their hands to the plow wrongly—and will ultimately suffer for it: “Do horses run on rocks? Does *one* plow *there* with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into gall, And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood” (Amos 6:12).

Plowing to the Kingdom of God

Our great Lord Jesus Christ also lovingly but clearly admonishes His true Church: “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). As we progress through the Days of Unleavened Bread and de-leaven our lives of sin, we are strengthening our hand on the plow.

Let’s therefore, with all our might and with all the might that God may give us plow straight furrows that will yield large spiritual harvests when our Savior returns to earth!

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