

“LIFT UP YOUR VOICE LIKE A SHOFAR”

Offertory Message by John Wheeler

Day of Atonement – Sabbath, September 22, 2007

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Isaiah 58:1 literally says, “Call out with the throat, do not spare; like a *shofar* lift up your voice...”
- 1) That is, speak “with open throat, with full voice coming from the throat and breast...do not spare, or restrain the voice. Let it be full, loud, and strong” (*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).
 - 2) This was part of Isaiah’s own commission.
 - 3) But it is also part of the Church’s end-time commission.
 - 4) The House of Jacob (all twelve tribes) is still here – and so are its sins.
 - 5) We have a role in carrying out this commission – through our tithes and offerings, among other means.

SPS:

- A. Let’s take a closer look at this part of our commission, in the light of some biblical background about *shofarot* – about “shofars”.

BODY:

- A. The *English Standard Version* translates Isaiah 58:1-3 quite well.
- 1) Verse 1: “Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.”
 - 2) Verse 2: “Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.”
 - 3) Verse 3: ““Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?” (...)”
 - 4) Of course, all this refers *in context* to *days of voluntary fasting* – but the problem and its solution (both spelled out further on) apply even more to the meaning and purpose of the *Day of Atonement*.
 - 5) We often cite this chapter from the lectern in the context of this day.
 - 6) My focus right now is on the implications of verse 1.
- B. The word translated “trumpet” in verse 1 is significant.
- 1) It is not the *metal trumpet* used by the Levitical priests – the *hatsotrah*.
 - 2) It is rather the *animal horn* used by priests, judges, prophets and watchmen – the *shofar*.
 - 3) It is the same instrument that God Himself used at Mount Sinai to announce His presence (cf. Exodus 19-20).

- C. What kind of *shofar* did Isaiah most likely mean?
- 1) Was it the shrill *ram's horn* such as was used at Jericho (Joshua 6:4-5) – a *noisemaker*, suitable for *inspiring terror of God's coming judgment*?
 - 2) Or was it the much louder, deeper and more musical *antelope horn*, which is most likely the kind implied in Psalms 98:4-6?
 - 3) Such a *shofar* – a *true musical instrument* having *dignity and power* – would have been used (with the trumpet, lyre, harp and singing) to *foreshadow the coming of God's Kingdom* on the Feast of Trumpets, especially when this very Psalm was performed.
 - 4) Isaiah's own sung poetry implies that the *latter* kind of *shofar* is meant – one having a *loud, full, and strong sound*.
 - 5) Such a *shofar* would be most effective at sounding an alarm or a call to repentance (befitting the symbolism of both Trumpets and Atonement).
 - 6) It would also be very suitable for the symbolism of the Year of Jubilee, during which the *shofar* was blown on Atonement.
- D. It is *impossible* for me to convey just how potent Isaiah's simple yet penetrating Hebrew "art song" is in Isaiah 58.
- 1) If I tried to give an English equivalent in words alone, *without music*, then I'd sound *foolish* – like one of the more foolish Protestant preachers.
 - 2) If I sang the Hebrew *without translation*, then you would get some of the *emotional flavor*, but you likely would miss the *spiritual attitude*.
 - 3) Brethren, I don't have the spiritual gifts or the office of an elder to *convey* these things fully – I can only *describe* to you what I perceive.
 - 4) Only an *inspired preacher* (like Mr. Armstrong or Mr. Meredith) can match Isaiah's degree and kind of power in English speech alone.
 - 5) Their preaching is as far from the shrill "noisemaking" of some Protestant preachers as the musical antelope horn is from the common ram's horn.
 - 6) Their message is all about *repentance*, as in Isaiah 58 – and also about *God's coming Kingdom*, as in Psalms 98.

CONCLUSION:

- A. We have an opportunity today to help our teachers in proclaiming this message.
- 1) Proclaiming it won't make us many friends as a Church – *quite the contrary*.
 - 2) But this day reminds us that many who are now God's enemies and ours will one day *repent* and become God's friends and our brethren.
 - 3) Let's be both wholehearted and generous in our offering, in anticipation of that day and in obedience to God's commission.

OFFERTORY MUSIC:

- A. "Give Courage, O LORD (*Hal Libba Marya*)".
- 1) This arrangement is based on a traditional Aramaic Christian hymn.
 - 2) It will be performed on the Celtic harp by myself.
 - 3) After this, we will have another hymn, and then announcements by Mr. Ron McGowen.