

MY PEOPLE PERISH

My tent making in the creation of ideas at times ushers me into some very large companies. Yesterday was an example; in the showing of a very large exploration idea on the Texas coast, I had been granted through a *liaison* access to the top three executives of a very large and venerable oil company. These were the President, VP of Exploration, and the VP of Land. My sixty-two years of age and thirty-five years of being seasoned to board rooms did not dispel uneasiness in being a very small frog in a large pond, among very powerful people. This company was known for its out-of-the-box thinking in oil and gas exploration, having gone into the wilds of the world in the search for oil and gas.

Nonetheless, the idea I presented is one of the most ambitious and largest the LORD has ever given me. The demonstrable potential is off scale, beyond the pale, beyond the imagination of many. Though the potential was addressed at the beginning of the meeting, its impact was somehow lost throughout the course of the meeting. As we progressed, I began to notice a tightening, a resistance, and cautiousness belying their reputation, particularly from the exploration VP. Two sub-basins were presented, the deeper of which was around 20,000 feet in depth. When asked the approximate cost for such, his answer was around \$20 million, with an added opinion that “it was going to be nasty.” Without going into too much detail, if my idea turned out to be right, \$20MM would have paid out in less than 5-6 months, an extraordinarily short return period, and the return would have been over 25X per well, with dozens of wells to be added.

My point here, and the point to be addressed in this paper, is that the engineer’s “box,” or vision, was less than the \$20MM, large as it may seem to us or anyone else. The figure was irrelevant, no less irrelevant to this oil company than you or I buying a tire for our car.

As I pondered the above near the window at dawn this morning, there began to come onto the radar screen three arenas of thought. One was the initial disappointment with humans unable to see my “vision.” Secondly was the comment made by the Weather channel’s “severe weather expert” about Hurricane Katrina, the Cat 5 hurricane impinging upon the Mississippi-Louisiana Gulf Coast as this is being written. His comment was in response to the barometric pressure of less than 900mb, and wind speed of 185 mph; “unbelievable,” he said. In other words, his vision, that had been formed all his life, never had encompassed a Cat 5 hurricane with a pressure of 900mb. The third arena jolted my reverie of peace at the window; “Ben, your vision as to my power *in you* is limited, and held captive in a box.”

Immediately the significance of the hour jolted me. I realized my own box thinking in the hesitation to write papers such as this one or to believe He *would* use me. This same sickness afflicts the Body of Christ negatively. *Both of us falter at imagining the unimaginable, or expecting the unexpected.*

As hurricane Katrina developed over the course of the next few days, this idea of “My people perish,” really began to take on the negative aspect. The negative side of “perishing,” namely the consequences of being unwary, unprepared, and unthinking in the face of a natural catastrophe, began to develop. With Katrina, the local, State and Federal leadership were progressively unprepared and unthinking. The people were similarly amiss or unable to prepare.

Three weeks later Hurricane Rita looked to duplicate Katrina, but even worse. Again, the roads out of town quickly clogged, and hundreds of thousands of motorists found themselves trapped without food, water, or gasoline.

“My people perish for lack of a vision.”

Proverbs 29:18

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

Hosea 4:6

“My people go into exile for want of knowledge.”

Isaiah 5:13

The Book of Isaiah was written to *God's people* during a time of relative peace, but with rapidly deteriorating social conditions, initially on the international scene. (Sound familiar?) The first section, 39 chapters, deals with the time at hand and why God is unhappy with His people. The latter chapters deal with warnings of impending judgment and the far future. The failings of God's people inevitably lead to His judgments upon their sins in order to preserve the holiness of God in them. The result is a purified people and a holy seed.

Isaiah continues writing in verses 13 through 16 of chapter 5:

“...their honorable men are dying of hunger, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite, and opened its mouth beyond measure, and their glory, and their multitude and their pomp, and he that exults shall descend into it.

Man is bowed down, and men are brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are humbled. But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows Himself holy in righteousness.”

The rest of the chapter is full of woe, and causes for the impending turmoil. “Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and smote them, and the mountains quaked, the corpses were a refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still....And if one look to the land, behold, darkness and distress; the light is darkened by its clouds.”

An interlude is found in the first part of the following chapter. It is the most magnificent description of the LORD; the latter half of the chapter then continues in the same vein as five, and is one of the most descriptive and horrific passages of God's dealings with his people.

In the New Testament, Isaiah is one of the most quoted Old Testament prophets. This idea of the Old Testament being irrelevant in the lives of New Testament Christians is untrue. Equally, to say New Testament Christians are not subject to God's judgments is also untrue. Notice how many times in Isaiah God is addressing “my people,” or those called “his people.” If there be any question, the reader should consult Hebrews 10 and the latter part of 11 to know who comprises God's “people.”

The parts of chapter five variously translated “perish,” “go into exile,” and “gone into captivity,” are all lacking a vivid picture. *Exile* here (Strong’s # 1540) means “*to bare, denude, strip, emigrate, be uncovered, revealed; the word contains the principal idea of stark exposure, be made naked.*”

Victorious kings in those days treated their conquered peoples predominantly in two ways, both meant to shame them to the maximum, to totally humiliate them. One was to gouge out their right eyes, and the second was to strip them naked, making them march with no clothes on at all, buttocks showing, men and women, old and young, rich and poor alike. The Nazis did this to the Jews in WW II.

Now the subtlety of the issue at hand is getting from the point of “wanting knowledge” to winding up “in exile.” Needless to say, when the people of a nation, any nation having all the appearances of power, strength and perfection, wind up suddenly walking naked down a dusty road, questions arise; questions that for all practical purposes, are inexplicable. Indeed, whenever God has judged His people there have always been cries of anguish but few words of admission.

Alas, the twentieth century has all but erased the concept of accountability and judgment from its list of cause-to-effect. None but the most fundamental of Bible believers espouse the concept at all, and they, even among Christians, are dwindling in number and fervor. Enter want of knowledge and languishing under a lack of vision, lots of entertainment and deception; anticipate nakedness. Our Christian “box” contains little but love, works, compassion, Bible study and prosperity. God Almighty has taken on the aura of gentleness and love. Why, He isn’t a God of violence; why, He wouldn’t allow us to be hurt!

It is easy from hindsight to see why so-and-so was judged, whether it is rebellious Israel or fascist Nazi Germany. However, from the mindset of the above, the concept of judgment is used less and less as time passes. Instead, glamour and glitz are substituted, whether it is WWII, Korean War, “police action,” or Iraq. Unpopular, politically incorrect losses of young lives such as Vietnam are forgotten as soon as we can buy our new house. Indeed, whatever is pleasant supplants the unpleasant; whether real or unreal is immaterial.

Lack of vision implies either the inability to see, or the abdication of that ability in someone else who would see for us. Since few of us are born incapable of seeing, we can for the most part eliminate the first. That leaves us with the abdication of our seeing for ourselves and giving it to someone else. That giving of our “vision” to someone else can be through default, laziness, unwariness, low levels of self-worth, preoccupation with something else, carelessness, ignorance or tradition. Our want of knowledge then, stems from our own actions; thus our bare buttocks will be of our own doing.

There is a great mental chasm here, getting from the lengthy and complicated behavior of America over the last two and one-half centuries to where we find ourselves today; even more difficult is the ability to explain where we will wind up. True historians understand this principle.

The following is my understanding; that means there is no claim of perfection or uniqueness. The fact that I am sharing it means there is a hope some will hear and benefit from it.

BOXES

Jesus spent most of his three and a half years responding to events as he walked down the road. One such was his mixing spit with the dust of the road and applying to a blind man. From a perspective of 1900 years, we are privileged to understand much not available to the people of that era. But in this case, the tables are reversed. It seems Jesus was performing one of the first “in-your-face” acts of the day. You see, the Scribes and Pharisees had written down in their little books precisely that “no one was to mix spit and clay to apply to the eyes of a blind man on the Sabbath.”

Jesus knew full well what their traditions were, and how they had enslaved the common people and violated the intent of the Word of God. This happened time and time again; yes, Jesus the Rebel, Jesus the Revolutionary, Jesus the Tradition Breaker.

From this episode let us trust we can see much deeper and farther.

Definitions:

“Box”	-a coined word depicting a restricted arena in which one thinks and acts. It is more or less a mild derogatory term describing a person who thinks within a very limited scope of thought. -a term describing <i>status quo</i> thought, along party lines, along politically and socially correct avenues.
Tradition	Secular:-the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, etc., from generation to generation by word of mouth or by practice. Theological: a body of teachings handed down; by Moses for the Jews, by Christ for the Christians, by Church tradition for the Catholics and Protestants.
Traditionalism	-adherence to tradition as authority, esp. in matters of religion.
Knowledge	-in the Hebrew context, the word means essentially “know-how,” cunning, and insight. The word is used alongside “wisdom,” again meaning knowledge, experience, insight, judgment in the entire range of human experiences from metal working to military and diplomacy. It is never apart from God. It is savvy in all secular affairs, skills, morality, prudence and spiritual experiences. It basically is the opposite of:
Simple:	inconsiderate, unwary, artless, guileless, unsuspecting; those <i>who through want of knowledge</i> and experience act unwisely. ¹

Socrates is known for his analytical processes, namely the questioning of every premise, no matter how popular, no matter how venerable or the length of acceptance. He was accepted for his mental prowess until he questioned the statutes of the ones in power at the time. These being threatened, they planned to force him to drink hemlock. He wound up volunteering to drink the deadly mixture rather than letting them decide his fate. Jesus fared worse.

Most of us are born into a plethora of behavioral traditions, the majority of which and into which our parents were born also. There is little knowledge as to the origins of most traditions. We simply are born into them, we accept them as normal, and go on with life without questioning them at all. Some are beneficial, some are marginally damaging, some are stupid, some are literally lethal, all without us suspecting or questioning a thing.

The traditions with which we are the most ignorant are those within the spiritual arena. Basically, all spiritual activity of today has been organized and developed according to someone's idea for the expression of "religious" rites and practices. Few of these have any true Biblical background whatsoever. This applies to the practices of Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, and all other Protestant denominations. It applies to cults such as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hare Krishna, et al. It applies to pseudo-religions such as the Freemasons and some other fraternal organizations having spiritual overtones.

So how do these develop, and gain such a hold into our minds and daily behavior? Can we escape the more lethal, particularly the ones with eternal consequences?

DIVIDE, CONQUER, ORGANIZE, DOMINATE AND CONTROL

From history as well as experience we can see a pattern repeated over and over again. **That pattern has been to divide and dilute the vertical relationship of the individual to Jesus as our Head.** This division and dilution begins with the innocuous appeal to man's inherent laziness. Hence, the suggestion to *organize* arises. Most of the time, organizing is commenced with good intentions. However, in order to organize, there must be an *authority*, someone to run the organization. As the organization grows, authority increases, and with that increase is a commensurate growth in *power*. As power increases, there is an equal growth in *domination*.

This process is how crossroads evolve into towns, thence into cities; it is the process by which loose, independent militias evolve into standing units, and thence into continental armies. Original leaders given armies form governments, and governments evolve into a nation.

This process is how trade guilds become fraternal organizations; talented craftsmen join ranks with other talents and form companies; men of unusual honor and drive become the Knights of the Round Table.

This process is what makes small things great, and the process by which countries grow and produce.

There is nothing inherently evil with the process; in fact it is for the most part, mutually benevolent, at least from the initial workings.

The problem is in our own natures, namely that of corruption.

More than likely we will elect a President who will Divide, Conquer, Organize, Dominate and Control; and, we will like it. Enter the gulags, right behind the stupid media darlings. It will be unimaginable.

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Issachar's progeny

¹ James Strong, The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, TN, 1990)