**The Convoluted Culture of Judah**

(II Chronicles 15:3-6; July 26, 2023)

***“Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: ‘Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.’*** ***For a long time, Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law;******but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. And in those times, there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands. So, nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity.” (II Chronicles 15:3-6; NKJV)***

***Nevertheless the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. And the Lord said, “I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, ‘My name shall be there.’ ” (II Kings 23:26-27; NKJV)***

*Judah had found itself in this condition…*

* ***GODLESS - Lacked Intimacy with Jehovah (“without the true God”)***
* ***LEADERLESS - Lacked Influence (true leadership = ‘INFLUENCE’)***
* ***LAWLESS - Lacked Instruction (God’s Word was not prominent in the regular daily lives of the people of God)***
1. ***GODLESS – Lacked Intimacy (“without the true God”)***

***O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So, I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus, I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.***

***Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:1-8: NKJV***

***“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money,
Come, buy, and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?***

***Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; (Isaiah 55:1-3; NKJV)***

***Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! (Psalm 34:8; NKJV)***

***As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, “Where is your God?” (Psalm 42:1-3; NKJV)***

***“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with ALL your heart, and with all your soul,…” (Deuteronomy 10:12: NKJV)***

1. ***LEADERLESS - Lacked Influence (true leadership = ‘INFLUENCE’)***

***Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Exodus 19:5-6)***

***“And that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.” (Leviticus 10:11)***

***Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (I Corinthians 10:31; NKJV)***

***“They shall teach Jacob your judgments, and Israel your law: they shall put incense before you, and whole burnt sacrifice on your altar.” (Deuteronomy 33:10)***

***“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”***

1. ***LAWLESS – Lacked Instruction - God’s Word became neglected in the daily life of God’s people!!! Lacked the love of God’s Word.***

***Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff,
So their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust;
Because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. (Isaiah 5:24; NKJV)***

***Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97: NKJV)***

***“Therefore, you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.***

***“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 19You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. (Deuteronomy 11:1, 18-21; NKJV)***

**CONCLUSION:**

***“…but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. (I Chronicles 15:4; NKJV)***

***And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had taken in the mountains of Ephraim; and he restored the altar of the Lord that was before the vestibule of the Lord. Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who dwelt with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. So, they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they offered to the Lord at that time seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep from the spoil they had brought. Then they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; (Chronicles 15:8-12: NKJV)***

***And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 12:33; KJV)***