

July 11 Su (Optional) — Daniel 1:1-21 — Exiled with Sinners

Solomon had prayed for future Israelites who would be exiles in a foreign land. Daniel was one of them. Although he was innocent, he was deported to Babylon because of Israel's rebellion against God.

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. ³ Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family^[fn] and of the nobility, ⁴ youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." ¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. ²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers that were in all his kingdom. ²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

ESV Footnote

(1:3) Hebrew of the seed of the kingdom

- How would you respond to being punished for something you had no part in doing?
- How did Daniel cooperate with the king's desires and how did he resist?
- How did God reward Daniel and his friends for being faithful?

1 Kings 8

⁵⁴ Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven.

2 Chronicles 7

¹ As soon as Solomon finished his prayer,

fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ² And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. ³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."

⁵⁵ And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying,

⁵⁶ "Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. ⁵⁷ The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, ⁵⁸ that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. ⁵⁹ Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, ⁶⁰ that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. ⁶¹ Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day."

Majesty — Our reading for today certainly emphasizes the majesty of God, showing His sovereign power, authority, and dignity. First, He demonstrated it by sending fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifices on the altar and then by filling the temple with visual and powerful evidence of His presence (2 Chron. 8:1). When we pray, we are speaking to that supremely great and powerful God. Secondly, Solomon alluded to God's majesty in how He kept His promise to give "rest" to His people in the Promised Land: "Not one word has failed of all his good promise" (1 Kings 8:56). That can give us confidence to pray boldly for things God has promised to us in His Word. Thirdly, His majesty is shown in how He can "incline our hearts to him, to walk in his ways" (v. 58). He helps us to do what we should do. Finally, His majesty is displayed so broadly that "all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other" (v. 60). That is evangelism, and we are to live so righteously and proclaim Him so enthusiastically that people will recognize the futility of serving any other god.

1 Kings 8

⁶² Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. ⁶³ Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.

⁶⁴ The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings.

⁶⁵ So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days.^[fn]

⁶⁶ On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people.

ESV Footnote

(8:65) Septuagint; Hebrew seven days and seven days, fourteen days

2 Chronicles 7

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD. ⁵ King Solomon offered as a sacrifice 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

⁶ The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the LORD that King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD—for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry;^[fn] opposite them the priests sounded trumpets, and all Israel stood.

⁷ And Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat.

⁸ At that time Solomon held the feast for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt.

⁹ And on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for they had kept the dedication of the altar seven days and the feast seven days.

¹⁰ On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their homes, joyful and glad of heart for the prosperity^[fn] that the LORD had granted to David and to Solomon and to Israel his people.

ESV Footnotes

(7:6) Hebrew by their hand

(7:10) Or good

Psalm 30 — A Psalm of David. A song at the *dedication* of the temple.

- ¹ *I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.*
- ² *O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.*
- ³ *O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.^[fn]*
- ⁴ *Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.^[fn]*
- ⁵ *For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.^[fn]*
- ⁶ *As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”*
- ⁷ *By your favor, O LORD,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.*
- ⁸ *To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:*
- ⁹ *“What profit is there in my death,^[fn]
if I go down to the pit?^[fn]
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?*
- ¹⁰ *Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”*
- ¹¹ *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,*
- ¹² *that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!*

ESV Footnotes

(30:3) Or *to life, that I should not go down to the pit*

(30:4) Hebrew *to the memorial of his holiness* (see Exodus 3:15)

(30:5) Or *and in his favor is life*

(30:9) Hebrew *in my blood*

(30:9) Or *to corruption*

Celebrating Feast — The completion and dedication of the temple was one of the greatest events in Israel’s history and it deserved a grand celebration. After the temple construction was completed, its dedication was delayed for several months in order to connect it to the event of the Feast of Tabernacles, when thousands of Jews would travel to Jerusalem. The dedication celebration was first, lasting seven days. David’s Psalm 30 was composed to be used as part of that celebration, with its theme of thanksgiving to God for what He had done. The feast that followed was huge, involving “a great assembly” (1 Kings 8:65). It included the killing of 142,000 animals, some parts offered in sacrifice but most of the meat being provided as food for the crowd during the second

seven days. It was a great success and the people “*went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown*” (v. 66). Note that even though David designed the temple and Solomon built it, God got the credit for it. What big event will you celebrate this year? It might be a milestone birthday or wedding anniversary or paying off your house mortgage. When you celebrate, make sure that you recognize and thank God for all that He did to make it happen for you! David reminds us in his psalm that we tend to boast in our prosperity (“*I shall never be moved*”—Ps. 30:6) but we need to give credit to God because it was “*By your favor, O LORD...*” (vs. 6).

1 Kings 9

¹ *As soon as Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build,*

² *the LORD appeared to Solomon*

a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon.

³ *And the LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me.*

I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

⁴ *And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, ⁵ then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'*

2 Chronicles 7

¹¹ *Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished.*

¹² *Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night*

and said to him: "I have heard your prayer

and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³ When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

¹⁶ *For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.*

¹⁷ *And as for you, if you will walk before me as David your father walked,*

doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my rules, ¹⁸ then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.'

1 Kings 9 (cont.)

⁶ *But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them,*

⁷ *then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.*

⁸ *And this house*

will become a heap of ruins.^[fn]

Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' ⁹ Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the LORD has brought all this disaster on them.'"

ESV Footnotes

(9:8) Syriac, Old Latin; Hebrew *will become high*

2 Chronicles 7 (cont.)

¹⁹ *"But if you^[fn] turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them,*

²⁰ *then I will pluck you^[fn] up from my land that I have given you, and this house that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples.*

²¹ *And at this house, which was exalted,*

everyone passing by will be astonished and say,

'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' ²² Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore he has brought all this disaster on them.'"

ESV Footnotes

(7:19) The Hebrew for *you* is plural here [twice in this verse]
(7:20) Hebrew *them*; twice in this verse

If ... Then — God's second appearance to Solomon came after both the temple and the palace were completed (1 Kings 9:1), so it had been 13 years since the temple dedication (see 9:10). Solomon's prayer of dedication had included warnings to the people about turning away from God; now God repeats the same kind of warning to Solomon. Solomon was at the midpoint and high point of his 40-year reign (11:42) and he needed a reminder from God about the importance of continued obedience by him and by the nation. God presented two if/then situations, one positive and the other negative. The first involved a promise of David's continued dynasty but it had a condition: "...if you will walk before me ... with integrity of heart and uprightness" (9:4). Blessing was to follow obedience. The second if/then combination was negative: "*But if you turn aside from following me ... then I will cut off Israel ... and the house ... for my name I will cast out of my sight*" (vv. 6-7). Disaster would follow disobedience. It is pretty simple, isn't it? Did Solomon obey? We will see that this is the point at which he began his downward slide. Obedience is just as important for us today. Jesus said, "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). The half-brother of Jesus mentioned the blessings of obedience: "*But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing*" (James 1:25). We need to avoid disaster and ensure blessings through obedience.

1 Kings 9

¹⁰ *At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house, ¹¹ and Hiram king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold, as much as he desired, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. ¹² But when Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities that Solomon had given him, they did not please him. ¹³ Therefore he said, "What kind of cities are these that you have given me, my brother?" So they are called the land of Cabul to this day. ¹⁴ Hiram had sent to the king 120 talents^[fn] of gold.*

¹⁵ *And this is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon drafted to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer ¹⁶ (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife; ¹⁷ so Solomon rebuilt Gezer)*

and Lower Beth-horon ¹⁸ and Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of Judah,^[fn] ¹⁹ and all the store cities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

²⁰ *All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel— ²¹ their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction^[fn]—these Solomon drafted to be slaves, and so they are to this day.*

ESV Footnotes

(9:14) A *talent* was about 75 pounds or 34 kilograms

(9:18) Hebrew lacks *of Judah*

(9:21) That is, set apart (devote) as an offering to the Lord (for destruction)

2 Chronicles 8

¹ *At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own house,*

² *Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given to him, and settled the people of Israel in them.*

³ *And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah and took it. ⁴ He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the store cities that he built in Hamath. ⁵ He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities with walls, gates, and bars, ⁶ and Baalath, and all the store cities that Solomon had and all the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.*

⁷ *All the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel, ⁸ from their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel had not destroyed—these Solomon drafted as forced labor, and so they are to this day.*

Seeds of Apostasy — The dictionary defines apostasy as “abandonment of a previous loyalty.” Solomon had recognized the people’s tendency toward apostasy in his prayer at the temple dedication (1 Kings 8:46) and God later warned him about turning aside from following Him (9:6), yet our passage for today shows that the seeds of apostasy were well planted in Israel. When Moses was still alive, God warned Israel about their future kings accumulating wives and horses (Deut. 17:16-17), which was exactly what Solomon was beginning to do. And who were these people Solomon used for forced labor? The “*Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites*” (2 Chron. 8:7) were the same people God had warned about earlier, that if Israel allowed them to stay, “*they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods*” (Deut. 7:4). Sometimes we also tend to bend God’s rules in order to accommodate our desires. When we do, we plant seeds of apostasy—weeds that will choke out our singular devotion to God. Don’t plant those seeds!

1 Kings 9

²² *But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves. They were the soldiers, they were his officials, his commanders, his captains, his chariot commanders and his horsemen.*

²³ *These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work: 550 who had charge of the people who carried on the work.*

²⁴ *But Pharaoh's daughter went up from the city of David to her own house that Solomon had built for her.*

Then he built the Millo.

²⁵ *Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar that he built to the LORD, making offerings with it^[fn] before the LORD.*

commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths. ¹⁴ According to the ruling of David his father, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry before the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions at each gate, for so David the man of God had commanded. ¹⁵ And they did not turn aside from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites concerning any matter and concerning the treasuries.

So he finished the house.

²⁶ *King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. ²⁷ And Hiram sent with the fleet his servants, seamen who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon. ²⁸ And they went to Ophir and brought from there gold, 420 talents, and they brought it to King Solomon.*

ESV Footnote

(9:25) Septuagint lacks *with it*

2 Chronicles 8

⁹ *But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work; they were soldiers, and his officers, the commanders of his chariots, and his horsemen.*

¹⁰ *And these were the chief officers of King Solomon, 250, who exercised authority over the people.*

¹¹ *Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, "My wife shall not live in the house of David king of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy."*

¹² *Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built before the vestibule, ¹³ as the duty of each day required, offering according to the*

¹⁶ *Thus was accomplished all the work of Solomon from^[fn] the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until it was finished.*

So the house of the LORD was completed.

¹⁷ *Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. ¹⁸ And Hiram sent to him by the hand of his servants ships and servants familiar with the sea, and they went to Ophir together with the servants of Solomon and brought from there 450 talents^[fn] of gold and brought it to King Solomon.*

ESV Footnotes

(8:16) Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew *to*

(8:18) A *talent* was about 75 pounds or 34 kilograms

Careful Obedience — Solomon showed great care in being obedient to God in this passage. The first was in not allowing Pharaoh's daughter to live in David's palace with Solomon while the temple and Solomon's palace were being built. She was considered to be a pagan who worshiped different gods and David's palace was considered to be a holy place while the ark of the covenant was housed there during construction of the temple (2 Chron. 8:11). Holy and unholy don't mix. The second way Solomon showed obedience was in following the commands of Moses and David in how offerings to Yahweh were to be made (vv. 13-15). God was pleased with this and Solomon was shown many subsequent blessings as we will see in the following chapter. It is important to live a holy life and to be obedient to God. His commandments are not suggestions or rules to follow when it is convenient or desirable; they are the laws of the King of kings and creator of all.

Meditation: There are two apparent discrepancies in this passage that should be addressed. The first is about the number of officers who ruled over the slaves. According to 1 Kings 9:23, there were 550, but 2 Chron. 8:10 says there were 250, a difference of 300. We didn't talk about it earlier but there was also a difference in the total number of officers over forced labor, where in 1 Kings 5:16 it is 3,300 and in 2 Chron. 2:18 it was 3,600, also a difference of 300. The most satisfying explanation I found for these differences suggested that there were different levels of officers: "The overseers of Solomon's forced workers were divided into three parts: the first contained 3,300, the second higher-level group were 300 [totaling 3,600], and the third elite leaders were 250 ... which make 550" (Geneva Study Bible).

The second difference is the number of talents of gold that were brought from Ophir to King Solomon, 1 Kings 9:28 claiming it was 420 and 2 Chronicles 8:18 says it was 450. Most commentaries I read felt that the 30-talent difference was the amount that Solomon returned as wages to those who obtained and brought the gold to him.

July 17 Sa (Optional) — Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 — Different seeds

We have read that Solomon was sowing seeds of apostasy by marrying foreign women and accumulating horses, against the Lord's command. It gets worse. Today, we take a break to read a parable from Jesus about sowing seeds of two different kinds. Thankfully, He also interpreted it for His disciples (and us).

²⁴ He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷ And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' ²⁸ He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹ But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place

there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

Some people have said that “*the field*” is the church with undetected unbelievers mixed in with the believers. While there is certainly some of that in our experience today, Jesus clearly defined it: “*The field is the world*” (v. 38). The seeds sown by the devil include our neighbors, co-workers, fellow students, etc. It is the whole culture around us. We are not to isolate ourselves from them but are not to be influenced or swayed by them, either. Instead, we are to “*be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world*” (Phil. 2:15).