

Message Twelve

A God Who Hides Himself—the Hidden God

Scripture Reading: Isa. 45:15; Eph. 3:16-17; Phil. 2:13; Luke 18:1-8

**I. “Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior”—
Isa. 45:15:**

- A. Hardly any of God’s children know that the Bible speaks of God as a God who hides Himself—v. 15:
 - 1. This proves that God’s children do not have an adequate knowledge of God as the One who hides Himself.
 - 2. We may know God as the mighty God, the righteous God, and the God who is full of grace and lovingkindness; however, we may not know God as the God who hides Himself—Luke 1:49; 1 Pet. 5:6; Rev. 15:3; Eph. 2:7; Psa. 17:7.
- B. Although our God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and full of forgiveness, He is also the hiding God, as the book of Esther indicates—4:14.
- C. God created the universe and then hid Himself within it, until we do not know where to find Him—Job 23:3.
- D. God did countless things in the midst of the children of Israel and countless things in their personal lives, yet He concealed Himself; He was ceaselessly working, yet He was always hidden—Isa. 45:15.
- E. We need to realize that the omnipotent God whom we are serving is still hiding Himself, especially when He is helping us—John 14:26; Rom. 8:28:
 - 1. We cannot see Him, and apparently, He is not doing anything.
 - 2. Actually, in a hidden way He is doing many things for us, as He is strengthening us with power through His Spirit into the inner man so that Christ may make His home in our hearts—vv. 28, 34; Esth. 4:14; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:16-17a.
- F. The God who hides Himself is operating within us silently yet mightily—Phil. 2:13:
 - 1. Our responsibility is to cooperate with Him by responding to the inner sense deep within us—Rom. 8:6.
 - 2. Whenever we sense God living and acting within us, we should say Amen, for there, in the depths of our being, secretly and ceaselessly the God who hides Himself is working.
- G. If we study the Scriptures carefully, we will see that God has the kind of temperament that dislikes ostentation; He likes to work secretly rather than openly—Matt. 6:1-8.
- H. Our disposition is diametrically opposed to God’s disposition, a disposition that hides itself—Isa. 45:15:
 - 1. God likes concealment; we like display—Matt. 6:1.
 - 2. God does not crave outward manifestations; we cannot be content without them—v. 2.
 - 3. This divine disposition constitutes a great trial and test to us.

II. The book of Esther supplies a vivid record of how the hiding God of Israel secretly took care of His oppressed elect in their dispersion and openly saved His persecuted elect in their captivity—1:1-22; 2:1-23:

- A. The crucial point of this book is that the very God who chose Israel, the descendants of Abraham, as His elect, after He gave them into captivity to the Gentile nations, became a hidden God to them to take care of them secretly and save them openly while acting in secrecy—Isa. 45:15:
 - 1. This is the reason that the book of Esther does not mention the name of God even in places when the name of God should be mentioned—4:3, 16.
 - 2. On the one hand, God used the Gentile nations as tools to discipline His people; on the other hand, the hiding God was with the people of Israel, caring for them.
- B. The hiding God did many things for Israel in a secret way:
 - 1. The hiding God established a top king in the Gentile world in power over a great empire extending from India to Ethiopia—1:1-2.
 - 2. The hiding God caused the top king to depose his queen because of her disobedience to his word—vv. 3-22.
 - 3. In His secret care the hiding God raised up Esther, a Jewish orphan virgin, to be crowned by the top king as his queen—2:1-18.
- C. During the years of the captivity, God was hiding, and He is still hiding; even today in the church age, God is hiding Himself—Isa. 45:15.

III. The significance of the parable in Luke 18:1-8 is profound, and we need to know God as He is revealed, as the hidden God:

- A. The widow in verse 3 signifies the believers; in a sense, the believers in Christ are a widow in the present age because their Husband, Christ, is apparently absent from them—2 Cor. 11:2.
- B. Like the widow in the parable (Luke 18:3), we believers in Christ have an opponent, Satan the devil, concerning whom we need God's avenging:
 - 1. This parable indicates the suffering we have from our opponent during the Lord's apparent absence.
 - 2. During His apparent absence, we are a widow whose opponent is troubling her all the time.
- C. While our opponent is persecuting us, it seems that our God is not righteous, for He allows His children to be unrighteously persecuted—1 Pet. 2:20; 3:14, 17; 4:13-16, 19:
 - 1. Throughout the centuries, thousands upon thousands of honest and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus have suffered unrighteous persecution; even today many are undergoing unrighteous treatment—Rev. 2:8-10.
 - 2. Our God seems to be unjust, since He does not come in to judge and vindicate; because of this situation, the Lord Jesus used an unjust judge to signify God, who does not seem to do anything on behalf of His persecuted people—Luke 18:2-6.
- D. The widow in the parable kept coming to the unrighteous judge and asking him to avenge her of her opponent; we ought to pray persistently for this avenging and should not lose heart—vv. 1, 3:

1. When our Husband is apparently absent and we are left on earth as a widow, temporarily our God seems to be an unrighteous judge—v. 6.
 2. Although He appears to be unrighteous, we still must appeal to Him, pray persistently, and bother Him again and again, for He will carry out quickly the avenging of His chosen ones, who “cry to Him day and night”—vv. 7-8a.
- E. Revelation 8:5 implies the answer to 6:9-11 and Luke 18:7-8:
1. The prayers of the saints in Revelation 8:3-4 must be for the judgment of the earth, which opposes God’s economy.
 2. God’s judgment upon the earth—casting fire to the earth—is the answer to the prayers of the saints with Christ as the incense—vv. 3-5.
- F. “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”—Luke 18:8b:
1. Literally, the Greek words rendered “faith” mean “the faith”; this denotes the persistent faith for our persistent prayer, like that of the widow.
 2. The faith through which we were saved is the initial stage of faith; the faith that brought us into a life union with Christ is the linking faith—the faith that comes into us through our contacting the Triune God continually so that we may live by the Son of God—Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20; John 14:19.
 3. The linking faith is the divine requirement for the overcomers to meet Christ in His triumphant return—Luke 18:8b:
 - a. Linking faith is the Triune God moving in us to link us to His unsearchable riches—Eph. 3:8.
 - b. Linking faith is the faith of the believers who have no trust in themselves; rather, their trust is in God—2 Cor. 1:9.
 - c. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will find a number of overcomers who are living by the linking faith and will regard them as treasures for His kingdom in the thousand years of His reign—Luke 18:8b; Rev. 20:4, 6.