



I HAVE heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. ²⁶ How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; ²⁷ Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. ²⁸ The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. ²⁹ Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? ³⁰ Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. ³¹ Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. ³² Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:25-32)

Some of my Baptist friends in the ministry (and the majority of churches in Enterprise are Baptist) scold me for having a Lord's Table with a cross and candles. They claim this to be proof we are Roman Catholic. But when they posit the question, they refer to the Lord's Table as an 'ALTAR.' In fact, most Baptist churches have a table in the sanctuary to which they refer as an 'altar.'

I respond in Bible-believing Anglican churches, we do not have an altar. In fact, the term altar is never mentioned in our traditional Book of Common Prayer. Why? Because the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ was once and for all made on our behalf, and that sacrifice was sufficient to redeem and save us from our sins. The priest, or minister, in the Anglican Church does not offer a renewed sacrifice of Christ during what the Romans refer to as Holy Mass. That is a ridiculously unbiblical concept, for Christ was sacrificed once only, and that is sufficient. *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for*

the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. (Hebrews 7:26-27) The purpose of an altar is to offer sacrifices, so what sacrifices need the Baptist to offer? Of course, I am teasing them, for I know they do not mean what they say in calling the Lord's Table an altar.

But what of the candles? What purpose serve they? The right candle (facing outward) represents the Holy Gospel of Christ while the left candle represents the teaching of the apostles. The candles altogether represent the light of Christ and His Word going forth into an otherwise sin-darkened world. Our Lord made more than one reference to light, lamps and candles. Why should we not use them as well to teach truth? *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* (Revelation 2:5) Well, in the Reformation Anglican Church we still have our candles.

Now, the Cross! Why do we have a cross on the Lord's Table, they ask? Because it represents that once-and-for-all sacrifice our Lord has made for us. He is not on the cross – the cross, to our great joy – is empty for He is risen. Every Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian Church of which I am familiar has that very Cross at the very top of their building on a steeple. So, forgive us if we are so brash as to show the cross on the Table that the Lord attends at Communion. God's Word is an all-consuming fire that purifies, but also a Hammer that breaks into pieces.

I make the above points in order to connect the Lord's use of symbols (such as that of the Hammer) to illustrate truths in a manner in which we can more readily comprehend them.

A Hammer is an essential tool in building. Few structures, even monuments, can be fashioned without the use of this instrument. It is used to break rocks into smaller structures, and into chips even as the Builder desires. Christ is our Rock from the beginning, and remains our Great Rock today. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.* But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:1-5) It takes a strong arm and a hardened instrument to break a Rock into chips, but that is what God's Hammer (Word) does! Jesus was broken for us, and He was the Rock upon which the Church is built – not the pebble to which He referred to as Peter.

Why then did the Lord make this statement? *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* (Matthew 16:18) One thing for certain is that our Lord was not referring to Peter as the foundation of the Church! *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 3:11) Our Lord was referring to Himself as the Rock in the same sense that He referred to the Bread of Communion as *this is my body*. In examining the Greek terms applying to Peter and to Christ, we will find that the Lord is referring to Peter as a stone, and Himself as a Rock. Peter was an apostle by right of the doctrine of Christ which he believed and would teach. God used the Hammer of His Word to chip Peter from that great Rock of Christ through many trials and tribulations. So, Peter, being a chip off the old block, would demonstrate the same character and likeness to Christ that we all must do as Christians. Even a chip from a rock still possesses the same properties of the Rock from which it is chipped. As Christians, we must also resemble the Christ whom we claim as our Lord and Maker.

A Hammer can do nothing of itself. It must be put to use by an intentional arm. God has used His Hammer throughout history to mold nations, to rebuke and destroy ungodly peoples, to bring judgment against His own when they are enamored with the world. A Hammer not only breaks things apart, but may be used to build things up as well. He may break a man down so that He can rebuild Him in His own image. Inside every rock is a *David* or a *Piet* that needs revealing by the sculptor's hammer.

The Holy Ghost is the arm of strength in driving home the nails of character and perseverance into the soul of the elect person. In fact, it is the initial means of calling and of faith.

Consider the measure of your own life in Christ. Were you broken at some point by sin and grief? The Hammer is less needful when employed early in life. The needed dam is small when the flow is small; but when it grows to a large flood, the Hammer must work more intensely! Children, taught the Gospel in early years, need less of the HAMMER than men and women of mature years.

The Hammer is sometimes used, not to break, but to soften its object. We may have the right knowledge of the truth, but yet have a heart hardened by judgment and legalism. That heart needs to be pounded into a softer one. Has your heart been nailed to the cross in the same manner that we die to self and live for Christ and others – as He has done for us?

In considering life itself, do we have compassion that results in action at the sight of a hurting child, a dying animal, or an emotionally destroyed widow? Life is the most valuable possession in this world to every creature that owns it. God has made us to have dominion over the animal kingdom. That does not mean we do what we please any more than being a CEO of a large corporation means that we can drive it into bankruptcy. It means we are to be good stewards in protecting and caring for all life around us. The life of a dog is just as important to the dog as your life is to you, so why treat the dog in a cruel and inhumane manner?

God first wrote His Commandments on Tables of Stone cut from a rock. They were rigid and uncompromising. They still are in their legal application: however, God has provided a means whereby we can keep His Commandments, not of rigid laws written in stone, but as articles of love engraved on the soft sinews of our hearts. Love is the key to all Godly living. Without it, nothing else matters. The Great Commandment that Jesus cited summarizes the Law in love. Love covers ALL sins. (see Prov 10:12) And the true people of God do not obey rigid laws written in stone, but Laws of love written upon the heart. Even though they are precisely the same Laws, it is the state of the heart that enables obedience thereto. *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.* (Hebrews 8:10, also Jer 31:33)

Friend, has the loving Hammer of the Lord fashioned your walk and guided you through mundane walks to spiritual joy? Has He answered your prayer with a NO at times which later proved to be the very best for you? Has the Master Sculptor chipped away the rough edges of sin and unrighteousness to reveal a figure of beauty and holiness that lay beneath the false façade the world had overlain? If so, He is not yet finished, for His Hammer will be continually utilized in forming the real YOU from this moment even into eternity when you shall awake with a new likeness and a glorious body. *Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen!*