WORD STUDY – STEALING GOD’S WORDS

Jeremiah 23:30: “Therefore, behold, I am against the prophet says the Lord, that steal my words everyone from his neighbor.”

“I’ve got a million of ‘em.’ – Jimmy Durante

During the eighties when I was teaching Hebrew in a Bible College I started having students come to me asking to explain the word wait as found in Isaiah 40:31, They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. I explained it came from the Hebrew word kawah which is a process of binding. It is the word used for making rope. Rope is made from binding hundreds of delicate strands of fiber together. Any one strand would break alone, but bound together they cannot break. Thus, when you wait upon the Lord, you are binding yourself to Him. My students appeared very shocked at this and even questioned my accuracy. I soon learned the reason for their doubt. A very famous radio and TV teacher happened to be sitting in restaurant and had sort of an epiphany. He began to figure that his waitress was waiting upon him and thus was serving
him. From that he concluded that Isaiah meant that if you wait or serve God he will renew your strength. This teacher was obviously looking only at the English text and defining the English word wait ignoring the fact that the English word is merely a translation from the Hebrew. However, this teacher was very famous, popular and everything my students dreamt of being. To my surprise, over the next few months I started hearing all these preachers and teachers who were dreaming of hitting the big time like this famous teacher, who could purchase a few minutes of air time also preaching this very same thing.

What is so telling of this is that you do not need to take one Hebrew class to know that service has nothing to do with the word for wait in Isaiah 40:31. A few minutes of research and anyone could discover the true nature of the word wait in Isaiah 40:31. These teachers and preachers were not showing off their ignorance, they were showing off their laziness. They were not seeking and searching for God with all their hearts. They were, as Jeremiah points out, stealing God’s word from their neighbors. Worse yet, they put their own spin on what they felt service to God was, i.e., sending a donation to their ministry to keep them on the air. “Send a love gift of $20.00 and you’re strength will be renewed.”

These teachers were showing that they were not studying Scripture for themselves, they were seeking little gems from other teachers that they could use to wow their congregation to gain more support, finances and build their following. I remember I had a pastor of a small rural church ask to audit my Hebrew class. He said: “I want just enough Hebrew to preach from the pulpit.” He faithfully came to every class for two months. He would drive up to the school in the church bus, take his place in class and take notes. After two months I
never saw him again. I guess he got just enough Hebrew to preach from the pulpit.

When God says he is against such prophets, he uses the word alah for against which has a number of different usages. The word basically has the idea of a weed growing to the point where it chocks out the plant. God is saying that He is going to eventually chock out those who seek to consult their neighbors for the best spin they can find on God’s Word. The word neighbor is ra’ah. The word is sometimes rendered as shepherd or friend. But this is a shepherd or friend that you totally rely upon. Sheep totally rely on their shepherd. But stop and consider, you have wannabe preachers, teachers and prophets running to shepherds to give them a spin on God’s word. Some preacher comes along with a new revelation which sounds great and before long everyone is teaching that new revelation with no one really taking a close examination of it in Scripture. Before long the teaching becomes dogma and if anyone tries to contradict it they are accused of heresy. They teach it because it is popular, the newest thing and makes them appear to be cutting edge and clever. They will purchase the books and work books talking about this new thing. Yet, the people will never sit down with the Word of God and seek a revelation for themselves. Instead they will just steal God’s word from their neighbors.

These people steal. The word used for steal in this verse is ganav which is to carry away, like a storm comes through and carries away all it can. This is in a piel form so it is more than just to carry away it is snatching something away with little regard to the consequences.

As I study God’s Word and share my thoughts in these little
studies, I need to continually be aware that I do not take God’s Words and twist them and use them for my own purposes to force people to my way of thinking and try to say something that will make them think how clever I am. I must continually avoid trying to make people think, “Oy, what a learned teacher, come, come we must sit under your teaching,” in order to win their support and following. I have said repeatedly that these studies are not teachings, nor will I ever declare, “Hey, listen up, this is good teaching!” These studies are simple musings in my search to understand the heart of God. True understanding of God’s Word comes from the Holy Spirit. In other words if you are a pastor or Bible study leader, don’t go preaching my little insights as some new revelation. I do not copyright my writings as I do not believe they are worth a copyright. I am not the only one in the world who has these thoughts or musings. Anyone can quote or even publish my musings but I would prefer my little insights will spur you to dig further into Scripture and discover your own insight and revelation. You do not need to waste your time with my cornball musings which have a personal application for myself. You don’t need to steal God’s word from your neighbor because you know what? God has a million of ‘em.